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[THE BURDEN OF REMORSE.]

MORLEY GRANGE; OR, DICK MARSTON'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

Oh, what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile;
Yet for him there is rest at the grave.

MIDSUMMER'S golden sunshine, slanting low, filtered through the luxuriantly leaved boughs of the great elm tree which over-shadowed that corner of the churchyard lying under the mullioned western window of the picturesque church of a quiet English town, and seemed to kiss softly the bronzed, weather-bitten forehead of a man who sat on a low, moss-garnished tombstone at the foot of a lowly grave.

A wretched-looking object, indeed, the soiled, tattered clothing expressing not half the misery which the man's attitude betrayed. His head was bent down to his breast, the arm dropped limp and powerless, the bony fingers just retaining strength enough to keep their hold upon the rusty hat which had evidently been pulled off with a due sense of the sacred solemnity of the place.

He sat there stirless—deaf and dumb, it almost seemed—for he made no sound, and did not lift so much as an eyelid when a richly-appointed carriage drove along the road outside the iron gate, and halting there, allowed the aristocratic party with into alight, and passing through the gateway, proceed up the centre walk towards the grand portion of the little country cemetery, for even graveyards have, on the outside at least, their aristocratic quarters.

This little episode made a great change from the sweet, sacred stillness which had reigned around him. The crunching of the wheels, the impatient pawing of the horses, and the coachman's angry ejaculations, all rudely broke up the silence which had only been gently ruffled by the sighing of the wind in the trees, or the twitter of birds flitting from branch to branch.

And this man never stirred so much as a finger, but sat there with his head bent, his face one black cloud of profound gloom. Once only he looked up from the turf at his feet, and then it was to fix those deep, sad eyes—something in their dumb pathos like those of a wounded or grieved animal—upon the humble headstone which marked the grave at whose feet he sat.

A strong, deep shudder went through his gaunt frame as his eyes followed the lines, letter by letter:

LILLIAN MARSTON.
Born June 10, 1830,
Died March 12, 1842.

It was this grave, then, or the memories it stirred, which held him in a trance, oblivious to all that the rest of the world could offer. What had she been to him, this dead Lillian, whose eyes had closed in the troubled sleep of death after a glimpse, whether of weal or woe, of this world's twenty-two summers?

He groaned, and dropped his head again.

The aristocratic party had paid their visit to the costly mausoleum in the other corner, the stately square of fenced ground where had mingled the dust of generation after generation of the great family of the place from Sir Rupert, who followed the banner of York, in the war of the Roses, down to the last baronet, who was instantly killed by being thrown from a vicious horse just five years ago, as the great tablet over which weeping angels, carved in a solid

block of marble, bent sorrowfully, announced to all the world:

REGINALD MAURICE FITZDONALD,
Baronet,
Instantly Killed,
Only Three Weeks After his Marriage,
At the Age of Twenty-five.

The lady, a stately, beautiful woman, clad in heavy widow's weeds, watched the lad, a delicate child between four and five years of age, with great blue eyes and long blonde curls, as he hung a wreath of delicate blossoms over the shield on the monument, and then, with a calm, grave smile, held out her gloved hand.

"Come, Maurice," she said, "the sun is warm. We will return now."

A portly, pompous-looking, elderly gentleman had waited in the background, watching the pair, the stately, beautiful lady, and the graceful, delicate child, with eyes at once of proud affection and pride. He came forward and offered his arm, which was declined with a quiet smile.

"Oh, no, father, I do not need it. Maurice may take your hand. Let us walk down this path. It is so shady."

And they passed slowly down the walk, and the carriage, at a gesture from the gentleman, followed on the outside of the gateway.

It was little Maurice who noticed the stirless figure before that lowly grave in the pauper's corner. He plucked at the crape-bound sleeve of his mother's dress, and then pointed with his dimpled finger.

"Look, mamma," he whispered.

Lady Fitzdonald looked down with a smile of motherly fondness into the innocent little face, and then her eyes followed the pointing finger. After a few moments the expression of careless curiosity changed into pitying concern.

"Poor man!" she said, softly. "That grave has even more sorrow for him than the miserable destitution of his life, it is plain to see. Tilsen."

And Tilsen the lacquey came forward hastily, in obedience to the clear, commanding voice. Lady Fitzdonald dropped a sovereign into his hand.

"Take it to that poor creature, yonder. It will alleviate some of his bodily wants, though I fancy it cannot much help his sorrow," she said.

The lacquey, it was evident, only half liked his task.

He was so fine and spruce in his costly livery, he did not care for nearer contact with that worn, bedraggled, forlorn-looking wretch.

But Tilsen knew better than to be laggard in obeying Lady Fitzdonald's commands.

Beneath that calm, placid exterior, slumbered a haughty and imperious will, and none knew this better than the house servants at Morley Grange, the old ancestral home of the time-honoured Fitzdonalds.

So Tilsen, with the coin in his outstretched fingers, a supercilious smile on his face, which the party in the rear could not perceive, went mincing along the path towards the grave, his steps crunching the gravel of the path, but without obtaining the slightest notice from the silent watcher by the grave.

"Humph!" said Tilsen, and then he coughed violently.

Not a movement on the part of the stranger, not so much as the lifting of an eyelash.

"I say," continued he, raising his voice, "my Lady Fitzdonald sends you this sovereign to comfort you a little in your trouble."

At last the words seemed to reach the ears. The head was thrown back.

The man started to his feet, and the eyes dropped their anguished shadow, to glare forth with the startled anger of a desperate animal at bay.

"What do you want?" demanded he. "I know nothing about you."

"I dare say not. I should not certainly expect you would," answered Tilsen, with a little sneer, glancing from the wretched figure back to his own portly person in its fine array. "I come to give you this sovereign which my Lady Fitzdonald sent to you."

"Lady Fitzdonald!" repeated the man still, with a suspicious accent in his voice.

"The lady yonder," explained Tilsen, motioning to the group in the rear. "She has a compassionate heart. She saw you and pitied you."

"Yes, I need pity," said the old man, dropping his eyes again.

"And here is the sovereign," said Tilsen, disgusted at the seeming ingratitude. "It is not every day a poor wretch receives a sovereign without so much as asking for it. Am I to say 'thank you' in return?"

"It is right, I suppose, that you should," answered the strange creature. "I ought to be thankful, ought I not? for I have only just set foot on English soil, and I have found here my only friend I cared to find."

He hung out his hand to the grave, and dropped his eyes again.

Tilsen tossed the coin towards him, and went back to his mistress.

"A surly fellow, my lady; I am afraid he didn't deserve your bounty."

"Poor wretch! no doubt his sensibilities were blunted by the very weight of misery," said the lady.

And taking her little son by the hand, she led him towards the carriage.

The fine lacquey opened the door, the Honourable Wallace Wellesley, her ladyship's father, assisted her into the carriage, and playfully tossed the future Sir Maurice after her.

The door was closed.

Tilsen mounted to his place, a crack of the whip, a roll of wheels, and the glittering equipage disappeared from sight.

The man by the lonely grave watched it with a bitter smile, and then glanced down at the coin, which still lay on the ground at his feet.

"I have just two shillings in my pocket," muttered he, "and not the prospect of another penny, and yet I am tempted to let that gold lay here by her grave, and be ground into its dust!"

Then his voice grew low and stern.

"Lady Fitzdonald, it is a strange chance that she should be the first person of the old days that I should chance upon!"

And then went down to the grave again that gleaming eye.

"Oh, poor Lillian! Shall I let this woman's paltry kindness bribe me from the path of justice? Ah! you are well avenged! This terrible anguish I suffer atones for the sorrow I helped to heap upon you! I never thought of this, never once, when I forced

myself to come back to ask your forgiveness, and to atone as much as might be for the wrong I did you. Oh, black, black day! that I should come and find you here! And you will not hear me, though I fall on my knees and howl forth my despair and repentance! You cannot answer, though I implore but one word to say you accept my vow of restitution!"

The low, hoarse voice was full of agonised despair, his hands were clenched together, the drops of perspiration stood on his forehead.

"Too late! too late!" he groaned again, rising stiffly. "I thought the only trouble was in getting back to England. To think how I have worked and planned, and bided my time, month after month, only to get here at last and find her four years in her grave. Lillian—Lillian Marston, where are you?"

Where are you? Look down upon me, and give me one drop of comfort in this bitter, bitter cup! Great heavens! to think of our last meeting! Oh, the biting taunts I flung to her! the wild, furious maledictions I poured out upon her! I can see even now the paling cheek, the wild, affrighted eyes!

Oh, the brutes we men can be! And she answered me never a word, only gave me that mute look of angelic forgiveness, of tender reproof! Lily, Lily, have mercy now! I have come to see my own wickedness, my vile selfishness. I am consumed by remorse, and you are not here to forgive me!"

He fell down prone upon the gray mound as he sobbed out the last words. There was no one now to observe him.

A bright-eyed bird perched on the stone gable of the church porch turned its tiny head and chirruped.

The boughs of the tree overhead rustled mournfully, otherwise there was profound silence.

The figure lay there prone and motionless half an hour longer, then the man rose, staggered rather, to his feet, put on his hat, pulled it over his forehead, and walked slowly away.

His path led him by the grand monument of the Fitzdonalds.

He stopped, just able to read by the fast waning light the inscription on the latest stone.

From that spot he took his last glance back towards the pauper's corner.

"Perhaps the Lord is merciful, as they say, and seeing my repentance, will give me yet some work to do. If not, I will go back and serve out my time in Australia," he muttered, and then with rapid step walked away from the churchyard.

The man seemed familiar with the town. He took the paths without a moment's hesitation, and kept away from the public streets.

At last, at a cluster of low stone cottages, evidently the abode of humble inmates, he slackened his furious pace, and seemed to deliberate.

"I wonder at which I had better try my luck?" he questioned, uneasily. "If John Day is in those parts, I would rather not fall in with him. He was keen as a briar always, and could see through anything. I am only afraid of John; the other one—confound him!"

Accident decided him.

At the cottage on the right hand the door opened, and a woman, in a short quilted petticoat and black cloth jacket, came out.

"Lily, Lily!" called she, shrilly, "come in this minute."

The loiterer caught his breath sharply. That name, was it a sign to guide him? Unhesitatingly he turned his steps towards the door.

"My good woman, I am a poor wayfarer. I am tired and footsore; may I come in with your folks to-night? I have a bit left to pay my way, and am not quite a beggar!"

The woman checked the hasty repulse rising to her lips.

He was not indeed like a common beggar. There was a strange air of dignity about him which touched her curiosity, and Dame Higgins was not apt to forego the gratification of her curiosity.

"Well," said she, in a tone between graciousness and gruffness, "you may come in. It's not much you're likely to get, anyhow."

And she bustled in before him, and lit a candle, and set it on the stout oak table, and then went to the fireplace, and gave an emphatic stir to whatever preparation was simmering there in the kettle. The man sat down, looking round him with quiet but sagacious eyes. He kept his hat over his forehead, however.

"I am something of a stranger," he said. "I only touched English soil down at the port two days ago, and I've walked all the way hither. This is D—, though it is changed since I knew anything about it?"

"Yes, that is certainly true; D— it is," returned Dame Higgins, eyeing him sharply. "Do you mean to say you belong in these parts?"

"Not exactly. I worked down below in the

factory a little while. Is there a chance now for a fellow?"

"A chance to work like a slave for half price," grumbled the woman. "All the sensible men are on the strike!"

And as if in heedlessness he put his hand into his pocket, and drew it out with the sovereign shining on the hard, horny palm.

Dame Higgins's grey eye sparkled as she bustled to the door, calling again, still more savagely:

"Lily, Lily Marston, if you don't show yourself here with that bucket of water I'll be out there pretty quick!"

Her unknown guest started up at the name, a hot flush of red surging to his cheeks.

He turned his head to listen, his eyes gleaming almost fiercely, as he heard a light hurrying step coming along the path.

For a moment it seemed some cold hand had seized upon his heart, stopping its very pulsation. This Lily Marston who was coming, who—what was she?

CHAPTER II.

A star, a child, a babe, almost slender, fair, beautiful, but frail, looking as the early spring flower came tottering over the threshold, her little slender fingers grasping the handle of the tin pail, till there were purple veins under the nails, her lips set together tightly in the effort required to hold the weight of the water.

Dame Higgins pushed her roughly as she took the pail from her hands.

"You lazy good-for-nothing! You have been long enough to have brought forty pails from the spring."

"I couldn't help it, my side ached so," pleaded the child, in a listless, dreary tone, conscious evidently of the uselessness of excuse of any sort.

"Side-ache! Yes, it is always side-ache now. I'm not going to be an idiot any longer. You'll just march away to the workhouse. You don't earn me your salt. I've kept you all this time thinking it meant something that talk of your mother, about friends and help coming; but now I am sure it was only the wild talk of a dying woman."

The child sat down, a grave, unchildlike patience on her little pinched face, and put both thin little hands to her side. In turning her head she met the stranger's eyes, and found them so full of tender compassion, of wild yearning love, that she started up trembling, an eager flush creeping over her face.

Dame Higgins went out to the other room for her pan of milk, and beckoning the girl to him the man said, almost fiercely:

"Little one, was your mother that Lillian Marston who lies buried in the corner of the churchyard?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Lily, scarcely knowing whether to be afraid or pleased.

He caught her up in his arms and kissed her fiercely and passionately.

"Are you happy here?" demanded he, as he set her down.

The poor little thing only repeated the word, but the tone was more eloquent than any lengthy speech.

"Happy!" echoed Lily, and choked down a sob.

"Would you go away with me, who would love you and care for you and do the very best for you, even though I am poor and miserable? You shall not work, and never, never for your mother's sake, hear anything but a loving word from me. Will you go, little Lily?"

"Oh, it will be too beautiful!" exclaimed the child, her thin chest heaving.

He bent down and kissed her again, this time in solemn gravity, and then lifted her to his knee, the child wondering what he meant when he murmured:

"The Lord is merciful. He has sent me a work to do."

Mrs. Higgins's heavy step was heard approaching the door, and Lily made a frightened movement, attempting to slide down from her place, but the stranger held her fast. The mistress of the house opened her eyes to their fullest extent.

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated she, setting down the pan of milk on the table and facing around.

"I am the nearest friend this child has left," said the man, quietly. "Perhaps you heard her mother talk about a brother of hers away in foreign parts. Have you heard the name of Dick Marston?"

"Good heavens! Is that you?"

"And I will relieve you of the care of the poor little thing. I will spare you the pain of sending her to the workhouse," he continued, with a calm smile.

"And ain't I to have any pay for all the time I have kept her?" demanded the woman, indignantly.

"If I had the means I should certainly endeavour to satisfy you; but as I came back poor, I must

rest satisfied that you obtained pay from her mother in the commencement, and that lately you have had your remuneration out of the little creature's service."

"You are an impudent vagabond," exclaimed Dame Higgins, spitefully. "A great deal of pay I got from the mother and she a-dying here on my hands."

A spasm of pain crossed the man's face. He stretched out his hands to stop her words, as if they hurt him.

"I tell you, woman, if you were kind to that angel you will be rewarded."

"Rewarded," scoffed the dame, spitefully. "I should like to see the first sign of reward. And as to the angel part of it, if you're the young woman's brother, you ought to know it must be a fallen angel. The girl's mother never wore a wedding-ring to my knowledge, and there's few women would have a child of that sort on their hands. Other folks, you see, can speak plain as well as you."

This man, who had assumed the name of Dick Marston, lifted up his head, while he still clutched the child to his broad chest, and, as a blaze of righteous indignation kindled in his eyes, dilated the nostrils, and set the firm lips under the bushy moustache quivering, he showed what a face of power and force, and by no means lacking manly beauty, it must have been before the briny waters of misery and the foul mud of sin had stained and furrowed it.

"Woman," said he, fiercely, leave the past alone. I tell you, in the resurrection day, if you have done a good act towards that poor soul, you will cling to her white garments and urge it as a saving grace to wash away the remembrance of your pitiful life of sin."

Dame Higgins stared at him and retreated a little from her belligerent position.

"Kind; of course I was kind. Didn't she stay here and die here? And haven't I kept the child; for all you say, she has been no good to me," whimpered she.

"I shall be glad to believe it. If I was rich, I tell you, I would empty my purse, though I know well enough you have got your pay as you went along. Now—well I'll tell you what I will do—keep us here to-night, give us a good breakfast, and the child must have a warm shawl, then we will go and leave you, and you shall have what I have got—this sovereign."

The woman stood a moment, looking him over from the weather-beaten face to the tattered, bedraggled garments.

"Well," said she, laconically, "it is a bargain," and thereupon proceeded to set the table for their supper.

Lily, smuggling close in the loving embrace, looked up, and watched all with grave, attentive eyes.

Once Dame Higgins gave a low, snorting, contemptuous laugh.

"What an idiot I have been," she muttered. "I always thought some grandfather would spring up and pay me well for hush money."

Dick Marston smiled grimly.

"You did not expect a poor fellow like me, then?"

"No, I didn't, that's a fact," she returned, with a good-natured laugh, for after all a sovereign in these hard times was better than nothing, and to be rid of the child and save the ill name of sending her off to the workhouse was still more.

For Dame Higgins saw that Dick Marston was too inexperienced to discover that Lily was already a sick child, and would die speedily unless she received careful and tender treatment. She consoled herself, therefore, by reflecting that she was really getting a good bargain, though by no means squalling the grand visions she had pictured.

"Well, take your supper," said she. "My man won't be home for an hour yet. He's gone to one of the strike meetings."

Dick Marston, as he assumed to be, pulled up his chair to the table and carefully set Lily on a stool beside him. He helped himself plentifully, and ate, heartily, like one that had gone without food for a longer time than usual. But the child tasted a few spoonfuls of the broth, more it really seemed to please her new friend than to satisfy her own appetite, and pushed back the plate.

"Why, how now?" said he, noticing the movement. "A bird would have pecked more than that. The broth is good. I hope my birding isn't dainty, because we shall not be likely to find anything but coarse fare."

"Oh, no; but I'm not hungry," said Lily, looking up at his face with a grateful smile. "I'm so happy, you know, in finding someone who belongs to me Uncle Dick."

"You can see that she hasn't been starved," observed Dame Higgins, dryly.

Dick Marston, as he had intimated was his name, looked down at the child with a yearning in his eyes more hungry than his appetite for food had been.

"And she isn't going to be starved now, least of all in love: are you, Lily?"

Lily nestled her wee, thin hand into his horny palm, and presently he had her on his knee again, and she went to sleep at last with her head pillowed on his breast.

The rough-looking man had a woman's holy tenderness in his eyes, as he looked down on the pale, sleeping face, and twice Dame Higgins, who had cleared the table and had got her knitting, saw a tear splash down and shatter itself into fragments on the golden curls. She took her seat in the shade of the chimney-jamb where her own face was in the shadow, but from whence she could watch the stranger closely.

He was grateful to her that she kept silence, and as Lily's breathing grew long and deep his head sank lower, and she could see by the stern lines around the mouth and the contracted brows, that his thoughts had travelled away and were fierce and troubled. By-and-bye he started, seeming to feel, if he could not see, her eyes upon him.

"I think I will put her down," he said, in a low voice, guarded, to spare startling the sleeper. "Where is her bed?"

"Over in the bedroom," replied Dame Higgins, rising and taking up the candle to lead the way.

It was a miserable mattress laid upon the floor. The man eyed it angrily as he laid her down, and carefully tucked the coverlet around her, and then he muttered, bitterly:

"It won't do to be complaining, I shall be thankful if I may make sure of giving her a good all the time."

"He's a queer man, I can't make him out," said Dame Higgins, inwardly.

"I think I'll walk out a bit. How long can I stay?"

"Choose your own time, for that matter. It's past the usual hour for breaking up, so I suppose they're having a fine time of it at the meeting, and Joe won't be in till midnight. But I thought you'd been tramping all day, and wanted a chance of rest?"

"I can't sit still, and I can't go to sleep," answered he, "but I shan't be long away."

He went out of the yard slowly, but once lost to sight of the cottage door, he increased his pace until it was almost a run, not, however, in the direction of the churchyard; he took a short cut over a stile and across a common, and came out upon the broad highway, leaving the village behind him. He stopped abruptly when the rise of the hill brought him in view of a turreted roof and stately walls, shimmering lights, and drew his breath sharply as though through clenched teeth.

"So they are still at it at the Grange. I knew I could not sleep to-night until I had looked at it. I wonder what sort of woman she is—this Lady Fitzdonald? I wish she had not given me that sovereign, though the Lord only knows what I should have done without it. Two shillings would hardly have won Dame Higgins's goodwill, though I won't doubt that Providence would have led me some way. It was Providence itself which sent me to that cottage, which put her there at the door calling that name, which showed me my work, and, please Heaven, I'll try to do it. I take it as a sign my repentance is believed in that this thing is put into my hands."

He paused, for there were even footfalls of a horse coming swiftly up the road behind him.

As it came nearer, the rider whistled a strain of a gay opera; at almost the first note of the peculiarly clear tone, the wayfarer started and turned his head to listen.

The horse cantered by, and then the man leaped over the hedge, and running across the park, Dick Marston muttered hoarsely:

"I must get to the lodge gate first. There will be a light there and I must see his face—I must see that man's face."

The park had grown up, and some paths were closed up and others had been opened since his feet were familiar with the place, but he managed to reach the lodge while yet the cantering hoofs were coming round the bend.

Suppressing, as best he could, his panting breath, Dick Marston shrank back into the hedge which bordered the lodge garden, unmindful that the prickly branches brushed across his face.

His hands were clenched, his eyes looked out from the embowering green like two coals of fire.

On came the rider still whistling. The lodge door opened; the keeper came out, standing there in the full blaze of the light, his grey head bent in a respectful salutation, which the gentleman acknowledged by a careless, good-natured smile.

The warm glow gave also to the unsuspected

gazer's eyes the picture made by the glossy-coated animal, with his rich trappings surmounted by the graceful figure of the rider.

He saw the gay, handsome face, the red lips under the daintily curled moustache, a smile, the bright eyes, sunny and cheery as a child's, the complexion fair and smooth as a girl's.

"Unchanged!" fiercely ejaculated Dick Marston. "The years have slipped over him lightly. He has had no troubles, no privations, no suffering. Oh the double-dyed villain! Will the heavens always be blind and deaf to his guilt."

Half unconsciously, his hand had crept under his blouse, and found the stout wooden hilt of a dagger, that never left his person night or day. His eyes rolled and burnt like those of a wild animal.

"Oh, for my revenge," cried his heart fiercely, and then he shuddered and looked up piteously into the starry sky.

"Good night, Mark, I think we'll have a glorious day to-morrow for our excursion. You say Lady Fitzdonald has no company this evening?" said the rider.

"No, sir, no one has gone through the gateway to-night."

And the horse bounded on up the gravelled avenue, and the gatekeeper bowed, and returned into the lodge, and all was darkness again as the door closed after him.

Dick Marston crept out from the hedge, and stood a moment considering.

"I must see what he is up to. If it costs me a discovery, I must see what his game now. There used to be a way to get up to the balcony where those lights are shining, and half the time the curtains are left up. I'll try it."

And with this decision he cautiously edged his way back, and was soon on the avenue side of the hedge.

In the bustle and noise of the servants, taking the visitor's horse round to the stable, he cheated the watchful ear of a great mastiff, chained at the end of the avenue, and skulking under the trees, and slipping behind trellis and pillar, treading like a cat, he made his way to the desired spot, pulling around him the great festoon of vine which trailed its luxuriant growth down the pillar.

Yes, one side of the damask curtain was looped away, and he could see plainly the luxurious room within—velvet carpet, damask chair, silken hangings, plate glass, gilding pictures—all the costly and elegant furnishing required for such a palatial home. The sight stung this shuffling outcast as he glowered down upon it.

Full in the soft lustre hung from an astral lamp sat the mistress of the house, and on the sofa beside her was little Sir Maurice Fitzdonald, their hands clasped in a playful carress.

The glowering eyes without marked every little detail in the dress of each, the lustre of the lady's silken robe, the fleecy lightness of the lace encircling the fair throat and ivory wrists, the glimmer of the diamond shining out from its jet setting in brooch and earring.

All these he saw, but more fiercely and angry he noted the costly texture of the velvet jacket the boy wore, the shine of the gold buttons, the silken stockings, the dainty shoes, with its gem-set buckle, the ring on the finger, the chain around the neck.

"Aye," muttered he, inwardly. "Fine surroundings, dainty care! And Lily lies on the rough mattress on a cottage floor, a beggar at that."

While he gazed he saw the door open, and the one man in the world whom he hated with such a deadly malignancy came in upon the scene, smiling, elegant, graceful, as he always was. Lady Fitzdonald rose to receive him, extending her fair hand graciously.

Dick Marston realised for the first time now that she was a grandly beautiful woman, and the visitor showed plainly by his manner, his admiration and respect. He bowed over the white hand with all the embarrassment of a courtier before his queen, made some short speech, and then turned to the child, catching him up in his arms and kissing him tenderly, and then put him down with a paper parcel, tied with ribbons, thrust into his eager hands.

"So, so, Roland Langton, I know your plans now," exulted the greedy gazer. "You mean to win a beautiful wife and a rich inheritance both at once. You have not bided your time for naught. Ho! ho! you little dream who is on your track! If you give me a thought, you say, 'that poor dog' is safely out of my way. Australia holds him fast. It was a lucky pinch I set the law to hold him. Two are safe in the grave, and Botany Bay keeps the other, and my path is clear. That is what you are saying, Roland Langton. Ho! ho! it is not in vain I have wormed my way out of bonds. I am on your track!"

He stood there glaring in upon the pretty picture they made, the beautiful woman of rank, the delicately reared and petted child of aristocracy, and

that elegant man of the world, clustered in a group with these luxurious surroundings. He saw their smiling glances, their merry gestures, and now and then the soft ripple of laughter came out to him.

Dick Marston could not endure it any longer. Grinding down something very like an oath, he dropped noiselessly from his perch, skirted the lawn, leaped over the hedge, and found himself again within the gloom of the thickly-wooded park.

"My work must be done within easy reach of this place, that is certain," he muttered, as he plunged onward. "And with these strong hands it ought not to be so hard to find. I must earn enough to take care of Lily, and to save up a little to help me to a lawyer. I can do myself with a crust. It's a lucky thing I managed to get here in warm weather."

The barking of a dog warned him to tread more cautiously, and as soon as he could he cleared the fence and took to the highway again.

Dame Higgins was just peeping out of her door to see what had become of him as he came into the yard.

"I've been taking a look about. That's a grand place over the other way. Who owns it now? the same Sir Reginald Maurice Fitzdonald?"

"Sir Reginald? Bless my soul! Sir Reginald has been dead about six years."

"Then, great folks die as well as common ones. And her ladyship hasn't married?"

"Laud's sakes, no, not yet, though everybody thinks it will be the next thing. That Mr. Langton is hanging about in a suspicious fashion, and she has certainly shown him more favour than she has shown to anyone else."

"What sort of a woman is she?"

Dame Higgins laughed. "What sort of a woman, indeed! It's lucky her father, the Hon. Wallace Wellesley, don't hear you. I can tell you one thing—she is as proud and haughty as though she came from the Royal Family itself. For the rest she is kind and good."

"The child is still asleep, isn't she?" he asked again, as they entered the house.

And taking the candle he went into the bedroom and stood full ten minutes looking down on the pale little face of the sleeper. The fierce look faded out from his own. She looked so sweet and innocent, and if he could only have seen it, so very frail. A tear dropped from his eye as he stooped to caress the golden curls.

"She is full as pretty as the heir in his velvet and gold," muttered he, and smiling softly, went back and stretched himself on the wooden settle, and when Joe Higgins came home he was sound asleep, and the dame was at liberty to tell her story without fear of any interpolations.

(To be Continued.)

MUSIC.

THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

This excellent musical society—the oldest in the metropolis—and the object of which is the performance of the highest class of orchestral music, commenced its season on Thursday, the 22nd inst. The series will consist of ten concerts, eight evening and two morning, under the conductorship of that tried leader and executant, Mr. W. G. Cousins. In addition to the compositions of the great masters of the past, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Handel, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Cherubini, and Dr. Sterndale Bennett, several novelties by living composers are underlined. Mr. G. A. Macfarren, J. Brahms, Silas, and Richard Wagner, as representative musicians of the present day, are contained in the society's programmes. A new symphony in C, by Brahms, will excite the interest of critical auditors, and M. Silas has written a symphony (No. 2) in C major, for a full orchestra, will command attention. Schumann's music to "Faust" will be heard for the first time in England, a concerto for harp and flute, by Mozart, is also promised. The Philharmonic is one of those societies which keep the lamp of high art burning among the lovers of good music.

MESSRS. CARRODUS AND HOWELL'S QUARTETT CONCERTS.

In the dearth of dramatic novelty during the run of the Christmas pantomimes and like entertainments, we turn with pleasure to a healthy "sign of the times," that is the substitution for the annual "benefit concerts," which certainly savoured of fashionable mendacity, of musical reunions resting their claims to public patronage and support on their artistic merits. Among these we may note the

entertainments provided by Messrs. Carrodus and E. Howell, two musicians who may be honourably distinguished as representative artists of the British instrumental school. These concerts, in which Mr. Carrodus, as a violinist, and Mr. Howell violoncellist, assume the responsibility of the programme and its execution, are given at the Langham Hall, the quartett party being filled up by Mr. Val. Nicholson (second violin) and Mr. Doyle (violin). Where the piano forms an accompanying instrument, Mr. Henry Thomas was the executant, and where, as in Loder's serenade, "Wake my love," and in Gounod's setting of Byron's "Maid of Athens," a voice part is added, Mr. Edward Lloyd filled the cantabile. As to the morceaux at the first concert, Beethoven's op. 18, No. 2, for strings, and Mendelssohn's No. 1, of op. 44, in D similarly scored, they were perfection. The same praise may be awarded to Mr. Carrodus's solo, Bach's "Chaconne." We wish these concerts of our very best executants, confined to the best composers, were more frequent, as cultivators of the general tastes and creators of an appetite for solid and original compositions.

LAST YEAR AND THIS.

Last year, when wedded life was new,
And, like the Spring-time, promised bliss,

Each hour and day of rosy hue—
I now, my friend, contrast with this!
You ask me what I miss from out
My household orbit, as I move?
I answer with a wife's sweet doubt,
"I miss the atmosphere of love."

"Last year my husband's gentle hand
Would pluck from out my path the thorn,
And gladly ransack sea and land,
That he his 'darling' might adorn.
The loving look, the tender tone,
The anxious heart, with fond care rife,
All these I miss, as here alone
I sit, a sad, neglected wife."

"Whence came the change I cannot tell;
I only know that, day by day,
I tried to do my duty well,
A faithful help-meet, grave or gay;
I only know I miss the smile
Of him who was my hope and pride—
The loving words that did beguile
My spirit, when a happy bride."

Oh! man, could you but know the gloom
Of that fond heart your love once thrilled,
That waits within the silent room—
An empty chamber, never filled!
The deep-drunk agony that speech
Can never tell! The dreary life!
You'd place your heart within the reach
Of her, your faithful, loving wife! M. L. K.

THE GIRARDS.

Among the "sights of London" may now be reckoned the renowned Girards, of whose fantastic saltatory gyrations the wonderful mural chromograph that stares at us from every boarding is certes no exaggeration. After astonishing the natives (and foreigners) in "Leicester Squar," they have been engaged for the day performances of "Sindbad the Sailor," the capital pantomime at the Crystal Palace. This, at any rate, must not be set down as another of the thousand-and-one blunders of the management of that unfortunate establishment, which, despite all the sins of its directorate, we should regret to see lost to the public as a "thing of beauty" that should be preserved as "a joy for ever." "The Crystal" and "The Alexandra" must be sustained for the people and by the people, *coute que coute*.

SAFEGUARD AGAINST VICE.—If children are allowed to cultivate a genuine love of knowledge, they possess a safeguard against vice when they grow older and mingle with the world, which is firm as rock itself. "My love of reading was my salvation," said a man who was early thrown into the vortex of city life: "I gravitated as naturally to reading rooms and libraries as many young men do to liquor saloons, theatres and club-rooms; but for my appetite for books I could not have resisted social fascinations that might have proved my ruin." This love for knowledge was fostered in early childhood in that man by an intelligent and judicious father who never extinguished a single spark of intelligence.

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

THE DRAMA.

ROYALTY THEATRE.

MISS KATE SANTLEY is now the "bright particular star" culminating in the ascendant of the Royalty. Her latest achievement is the character of the heroine of a new musical drollery by Mr. Alfred Thompson, called "The Three Conspirators," which is so constructed as to give Miss Santley occasion to appear in four characters. The plot of the piece is slight. Montmorenski (Mr. J. Stoylo) is a dramatic agent, afflicted with such imperfect vision that his spectacles are an indispensable necessity. He has a niece, Miss Victoria, who is stage-struck, and thoroughly confident in her own talent. Montmorenski is in want of a theatrical star, who must be superlatively gifted both as actress and singer. Victoria resolves to become a candidate for the engagement, and practices upon her uncle's visual infirmity by hiding his spectacles, and suddenly presenting herself as the serio-comic singer of a popular music-hall, gives a most faithful, though exaggerated representation of the vulgarity of some of the comic sisterhood. She also appears to her mystified relative as Madlle. Brusiambille, "an artiste in operabouffe," and as Antonio, a Savoyard. Her song, "Nobody Knows as I Know," as "the serio-comique," was an amusing impertinence, as also was another specimen "I'm a Fascinating Fellow." Then, as the "opera-bouffe artiste," we had a characteristic chansonette of the "café chantant" order, which was heartily applauded. The result of these varied displays is, that Montmorenski, on her disclosing herself, is so convinced of her talent, that he welcomes her resolve to adopt the stage as her profession. The clerk to Montmorenski, Ambrose, was extremely comic in the hands of Mr. J. Beyer. The music, as such music should be, is light, suggestive, often familiar, and full of "go."

ANOTHER and regrettable retirement from the stage, which will leave a void in the ranks of true comedy, is imminent. Mr. Compton, who has been some time suffering from a painful malady, is at length compelled to relinquish all hope of resuming his high position in the profession he has so long adorned. His "farewell" is announced for Thursday, March 1st, at Old Drury, when a series of entertainments will be presented and sustained by every celebrity of the stage. "Othello," by Mr. Creswick, Iago, by Mr. Ryder, and Miss Ada Cavendish, with Messrs. Mead, Charles Warner, Sinclair, Chippendale, and Cooper in subordinate parts. Bulwer's "Money," supported by Benjamin Webster, David James, William Farren, Kendal, Hare, Bancroft, Charles Collette, Marie Wilton, Madge Robertson, and Ellen Terry. The "Man of the World," by Samuel Phelps, Hermann Vezin; the "Critique," by Charles Matthews, H. J. Byron, Buckstone, J. Clark, J. L. Toole, Mrs. Mellon, and Mrs. Hermann Vezin; Arthur Sullivan's "Trial by Jury," by Mr. G. Honey, Mr. W. H. Cummings, Arthur Cecil, and a galaxy of female talent. These are among the pièces de resistance of the most sumptuous feast of histrionic and musical luxuries we have ever perused. Who would miss such a banquet of benevolence?

That unfortunate institution, the Dramatic College, at Maybury, is reported to be in imminent danger of collapse and being closed for want of funds, in which case the inmates will be driven from their home and maintenance. A public meeting is advertised for Thursday, the 22nd inst., in the saloon of Drury Lane Theatre, to prevent this sad catastrophe.

Her Majesty's Theatre having been brought to the hammer, and the highest bidder, Mr. Nagle, having retired his bidding, under protest from the auctioneer, the unlucky edifice may be looked upon as yet furnishing the subject of litigation. It is, however, now stated that Messrs. A. & S. Gatti have made an offer to purchase the property, which is under consideration of the vendors, and likely to be accepted. *Nous verrons.*

It is announced that the Duke's Theatre will reopen at an early date, under the management of Mr. Myer. A new selection is in preparation.

John Parry's farewell at the Gaiety was a leave-taking that reflected honour on the dramatic profession, the beneficiaries, and the public. It was announced that the veteran favourite would benefit by the substantial sum of £1,350. This is as it should be.



[ENGAGED.]

WHY SHE FORSOOK HIM; OR, THE SECRET OF HER BIRTH.

By the Author of "Basil Rivington's Romance,"
"That Young Person, etc."

CHAPTER XXII.

GERALD'S ENGAGEMENT.

GERALD thought of Madeline still, and wondered what she would feel on hearing the news of his betrothal. He did not repent it; it ended a long and painful period of inaction, decided his future life, gave him an aim and object, and if it did not promise him happiness it assured him the love and companionship of an innocent girl, whose joys and sorrows it would henceforward be his charge to share.

He did not see Juliet again till the evening. Her mother had not let her appear at dinner that she might reserve her strength for the party. Gerald saw her first after their engagement when she came down in her floating ball-robes, ready to help her mother receive the guests.

She had not the dazzling beauty of his first choice, but many men would have been proud of such a betrothed. Her dark grey eyes were so clear and bright, her complexion so delicate and transparent, her movements so full of grace, that it would have been a harsh judge who did not overlook the irregularity of her features.

She wore a white silk, long and flowing, strings of large pearls gleamed on her neck and arms, pink roses were twisted in her brown hair, and her face borrowed their hue when she caught sight of Gerald. My lady had not yet completed her toilet. These two were alone.

"Sir Roland has been very kind to me, Juliet," said her lover.

"Have you seen mamma?" she asked, half anxiously.

"Yes, and she will forget her old distaste for me for your sake. Don't look so frightened, child, I know she did not like me once, but we have agreed to let bygones be bygones."

He took her left hand in his, and began trying a ring on the third finger; it was a hoop of opals of rare size and lustre, set in gold.

"It was my mother's," he said, in a low tone. "I do not remember her, but I know how much I lost in losing her. I fancied you would prefer this ring to another."

"Indeed I should," she answered.

He showed her the inscription in quaint old English characters: "Tender and true."

"It was her engagement ring, she herself chose the motto; they tell me it was a true description of my father. They died within a week of each other."

The tears stood in Juliet's dark eyes, she brushed them hastily away as her mother entered resplendent in velvet and diamonds, and bearing little resemblance to the excited, anxious woman who had revealed her secret to Gerald that afternoon. A minute later the first arrivals were announced.

Captain Yorke danced like a man in a dream; he hardly realised what he had done, but presently when two or three old friends, to whom Sir Roland had imparted the great news, congratulated him, and wished him joy, he understood it was reality that he had proposed and been accepted; that it was of his engagement people were speaking, him they were felicitating.

How different was this brilliant scene to that, when on a September evening, which now seemed so fearfully long ago, he had led Madeline to Mrs. Ashley, and asked her to wish them joy; would these salutations, which now rang so joyfully in his ear, be followed by an end as sad as that which came after the simple heartiest words of the rector and his wife.

He danced first with Juliet; their thus opening the ball in the eyes of all the guests seemed to put the sign and seal to their engagement, then Juliet sat down to rest, she was not quite strong yet, and the captain had other partners, blondes and brunettes, tall and petite; all were charmed by his handsome face, all thought Miss Yorke would be very happy. Thus the night passed, and in the small morning hours when the guests had driven away, the four who all bore the name of Yorke, and who henceforward were to be so much to each other, stayed on a little talking over the party's success, then when they said good night, Gerald noted that Sir Roland's handshake was warmer than usual, and that Juliet's fingers trembled as he clasped them in his own.

My lady felt triumphant. Gerald felt strangely weary when he reached his own room, yet before he sought repose he took out his writing materials and indited two letters; the first was to his uncle, so short and simple, that it was but the affair of a few minutes; he merely told Mr. Elton that with Sir Roland's full approval he had been accepted by Miss Yorke as her future husband, and he sincerely hoped this engagement might bring happiness to them both.

The other letter was very different. Gerald was long before he had written anything to satisfy him, many an attempt had been destroyed, and the morning light was shivering before he had finished, and with a heavy sigh addressed the missive to

"MRS. ASHLEY,

"Luton Rectory."

The words that had cost him so much to write were simply these:

"DEAR MRS. ASHLEY,—I hardly know why I write to you, and yet I feel I must do so, to explain, not to defend, the news that will soon reach you from other mouths. I am going to be married. I do not excuse this step, it is no wrong, it needs then no excuse, but I explain it because I would not have you and Charles, my best friends, think that my passion of last September was the caprice of a moment easily forgotten. No! It was the one love of a lifetime, and I have suffered from her falseness, as I hope it comes to few men to suffer. I have not forgotten her, I can never feel for any other woman as I felt for the ideal I thought existed in her, but my ideal is dispelled, all is at an end between us for ever; what would you have me do? You, yourself, urged me not to let my disappointment wreck my life; so long as I am free to feed my memory with visions of the past, and of what might have been, I shall do so. I have many years before me, I cannot spend them in one long search after distraction, so I am to be married. My aim in life, my hope, my effort, will be my wife's happiness; she is a young girl, the soul of truth and candour. Judge my feebleness as pitifully as you can, wish me not happiness, but peace, and believe you have no truer friend than

"GERALD YORKE."

He had dated these lines from Grosvenor Gardens, for after a day or two given to making the acquaintance of Lady Frances Yorke, he intended to return to London, at least, for a time.

He had much to do, many arrangements to make before the time, as yet unfixed, when Juliet should become his wife.

Gerald had not thought, yet, of when this time would come, but he felt that it was not far distant; no obstacles lay before his marriage, the friends on either side would not be displeased to hasten it, and perhaps for both their sakes, his and Juliet's too, the ceremony, which should unite them, had best be performed without delay.

Phyllis Stone went home with her disappointment, and it was a sore disappointment to her to think that George Graham was engaged to be married, for the confidential agent's daughter had made a great mistake, and given him her heart, without being certain of obtaining his own in return.

There was something about Mr. Graham quite different to the other men Phyllis knew, and the girl, who had tastes and aspirations far above her surroundings, had loved him all the more for it; he had never paid her attentions, never addressed her a single compliment. But Phyllis, who was wont to cross-examine Mrs. Lambley as to the habits of her boarder—we mean protector—had ascertained from that lady that Mr. Graham never visited where there were young ladies, never took the slightest interest in the fair inhabitants of Hibernia Terrace who passed before his window, never alluded to any female friend, and never wrote letters (Johnson posted his correspondence), except to his family, consequently Phyllis had concluded her hero was fancy-free, and, if he did not care particularly about her, at least did not care for any one else; and on this fragile foundation she had been building wondrous dreams of happiness, the chief of which was their being engaged, and her expressing her willingness to wait for years rather than marry any one else.

All these dreams were dispelled by the sight of the photograph in Mr. Graham's album, and his declaration that its original was still more beautiful. Of course they were engaged. Men didn't have girls' pictures in their own private albums unless they were. Why, she had never given hers to Mr. Hawtree, although he had asked for it three times.

The poor little ex-professor of music was woefully behind the age, as you, dear lady readers, must long since have discovered. It would be a hard penalty for you if her theory had been correct, and you the betrothed of the man in whose album your head enchanted to figure. Why, at that rate the majority of you would have a startling number of admirers, and some favoured ones more engagement-rings than they could possibly wear on the third finger of the left hand.

Phyllis went home then in anything but a happy frame of mind, and for a little time she avoided No. 27 most steadily, and displayed the most cruel neglect of her friend, Mrs. Lambley, and all this time Mr. Hawtree was a constant visitor. He paid Mrs. Stone such kindly, son-in-law like, attentions, he listened so patiently to Mr. Stone's views on legal subjects, that both declared him charming.

Then he took such pains to make himself agreeable; he chose the subjects that Phyllis liked best, and always shared her opinions. He looked at her so admiringly, bore with her so patiently when she snubbed him, that she began to be afraid Mrs. Lambley mightn't have been so wrong after all. And he came to No. 9 for some other purpose than to play cribbage with the master of the house, or tell his wife the latest news.

It certainly was nice to have anyone so anxious to please her, to feel herself of some importance, and to know that a pair of grey eyes watched every glance of her blue ones; but Phyllis had an unconquerable preference for the brown-headed young giant at Mrs. Lambley's. One blunt, downright speech from him was more to her than all Mr. Hawtree's eloquence; and she set more store by some faded flowers he had given her on Jane's wedding day than by the charming bouquets her admirer never failed to bring with him.

She was sorry when she found out he really cared for her, for Phyllis was no cold-hearted coquette; still she did not know how to hint to him that all his efforts were useless; she could not make him see she preferred somebody else, because that somebody else was never there when he came. She could not go out to avoid him, because she had nowhere to go. There seemed nothing for it but to let matters take their course.

Meanwhile, father and mother were in a grand state of delight. The suitor was just what they had desired, not great wealth like Mr. Jenkins, but a good position, which they had learned to consider better. Henry Hawtree was an architect in good practice, and enjoyed, besides, a moderate private income.

There were no parents or guardians to take um-

brage at his marriage, and there was little doubt his wife would have a happy, careful home, and, in the future, luxuries too.

He was not mercenary; Phyllis's pretty face had won his heart, and he would not require a portion with her. So Mr. Stone's carefully hoarded wealth might go on accumulating, as he wished it to do, till some day his daughter's youth was over, and riches could bring her no special pleasure. At her father's death she would find herself an heiress.

But Mr. Hawtree seemed struck with sudden timidity before the girl whose golden hair and blue eyes had stolen his heart. Perhaps he feared a refusal, for it was a long time before he asked his question, and Mr. and Mrs. Stone had wondered why he was waiting nearly a time before. One afternoon in March he arrived at the little house in Hibernia Terrace fully resolved to end his suspense and to know the worst.

Phyllis was alone in the little parlour where she had used to give her lessons. She sat at the window, apparently enjoying the charms of the early spring. She had on a spring dress, too, of lilac cambric, and there were lilac ribbons at her throat, and in the sunny hair. Hawtree thought he had never seen her look so pretty.

"Mamma's out," said Phyllis, shrilly. "I am very sorry." And then they sat down in two chairs opposite each other, and neither seemed to know what to say.

She knew perfectly well what he had come to tell her, and she wanted to prevent his telling it. He wondered how best to introduce his wishes.

She spoke first.

"Mr. Hawtree, do you ever see anything of Mrs. Jenkins?"

"No," he answered, surprised, for the subject had never been mooted between them. "I have never entered her house since that night, in fact, I never cared much for Mr. Jenkins, and only went there from curiosity to see his wife. I owe her one good thing, my introduction to you." And he looked as though he valued that introduction very much indeed.

Phyllis understood that look, and went on quickly:

"I am very sorry. I should like to have heard of her very much. I hope she is happy."

She hardly knew what she said. Her one desire was to gain time, and so engross her visitor that he should find no opening to speak of the object of his coming.

"Oh," said Mr. Hawtree, trying to recollect the Hornsey gossip, since it interested her. "I don't suppose they are a very happy couple. She married him for his money, and he married her because he needed a mistress for his house and a person to sit at the head of his table. They have both got what they wanted."

"I should be very sorry if they were not happy," said Phyllis, sadly.

"Why, Miss Stone, you can't be fond of her?"

"I was once. I had known her so long; we had grown up together; besides she was not always as you saw her. When she was engaged to Mr. Scarens she was very different."

"I don't admire the name. I suppose that was before the advent of Mr. Jenkins?"

she said. Those blue eyes would never shine with love-light; never for him, at least.

"Yes," went on Phyllis, quickly, as though she feared he would interrupt her. "I have no brother and you have no sister, that seems to draw us together, and so we will be great friends, and some day, when you have found someone very beautiful and clever, and are going to be married, I will be very fond of her if she will let me."

She held out her little hand as though to decide the compact.

Phyllis must have been a very artless girl or she never could have made such a proposal. She knew little of the world and its ways, quite ignored society's code; but she did know that Henry Hawtree was one of the best friends she had, and she did not want to lose him, only he cared for her a little differently, and she would not deceive him any longer, so she said, simply, just what she thought, and her listener was too true-hearted himself not to see the sincerity of her words.

He took the hand she offered him, but did not immediately let it go. He had cared for her too much to grow quickly used to their changed relationship. He was conscious that at that moment he cordially hated the man who at some future time should put a plain gold ring on those white fingers.

"But I can't promise to be very fond of the person who carries you off," he said, awkwardly.

"No one will carry me off," said Phyllis, simply, blushing still more deeply.

He shook his head.

"You say so now, but when you meet with some-

one who—

What fault could you find with him, I should like to know?"

"None whatever. I like him very much, as a friend."

"Rubbish! you liked him quite well enough to marry him. You will be an old maid to a certainty, Phyllis."

"I think I shall."

And then she went and locked herself into her own room, and cried as though her heart would break.

Yet her mother really loved her, and would have done much to make her happy, only she did not understand her, and if she had, what good could she have done?

The next day was Sunday, and when the Stones were seen walking down Hibernia Terrace to church, without the handsome young man the neighbours were so accustomed to see in their train, these good people were, of course, properly astonished. Was the affair off?

Had she refused him? or had he only been playing with her?

But Mrs. Stone had not lived so many years in Walworth without teaching her neighbours the difficult lesson of minding their own business, so no one ventured on any remark or question in her hearing, but the fair gossips made up their minds as soon as she was out of earshot for the rest. It was remarked that she hardly spoke to her daughter, who looked grave and pale, while Mr. Stone walked full ten yards ahead of his family, and seemed absorbed in his own reflections.

All through that day Phyllis slowly realised what she had done.

Her mother's short, caustic speeches, and her father's averted looks, told her how they condemned her conduct, and for herself, she had voluntarily sent away the only person who cared for her, or seemed capable of understanding her.

His absence made a great blank in their little circle; all the greater one because her parents would do nothing to close up the void, and seemed bent on punishing her for creating it.

She was a spoiled child, and never before, save in the affair of Mr. Jenkins, had any unkind words been said to her at home.

She seemed to have lost the old heedless gaiety which shook off care.

Presently, after tea, she went upstairs, threw on a hat and shawl, and stepped out to church.

She did not go to the edifice where Sunday morning after Sunday morning she had accompanied her parents from a child.

She did not feel inclined to listen to an hour's sermon and the nasal singing of charity children. She went a little farther to a church specially condemned by her father as "Popish," where she was not likely to meet anyone she knew, and the gloriously rendered Easter music would present religion at its brightest side.

Coming out, when she stood once more in the busy street, a surprise awaited her.

George Graham advanced to speak to her. Phyllis hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. She had not seen him since the January night alluded to, and now she had believed him far away, spending the Eastertide with that favoured girl, who was more beautiful even than her photograph.

He greeted her a little stiffly, inquired politely for her parents, then he waited, making no attempt to go on, until Phyllis marvelled.

"Had you not better go round to the other door?" (men and women were carefully separated like goats and sheep at St. —) — "Your friend may be waiting for you there."

"I came alone, thank you, Mr. Graham. No one is waiting for me!"

"Alone!" he repeated, in surprise. "Why you are more than half an hour's walk away from home!"

"Yes, I know it."

He set off to walk with her without further comment.

She was half indignant at his surprise, half grateful for his care.

She determined to talk. It was so foolish that this man should have power to embarrass her, yet he had it.

With him she was oftenest silent, and when she talked she had the happy knack of representing herself at her worst.

"I was so surprised to see you, Mr. Graham," with a feeble imitation of her old gaiety, "I made sure you had gone home for the holidays."

"You made too sure, Miss Stone; I hope to go at Whitsuntide. You cannot have been more surprised to see me than I to meet you."

"Is it so very extraordinary that I should go to church?"

"It is extraordinary that you should choose to go alone to a church a considerable distance from your

house, which neither you nor your family attend. I wonder Mr. Stone approves of it," he added, rashly.

"He knows I know my way," she said, lightly, "brides it's not dark, there are the street lamps." Graham was silent.

These two seemed to have the most unhappy gift of provoking each other.

Phyllis repented of her implied falsehood.

"You mustn't blame papa, he didn't know I was coming!"

"Then why did you come?" asked Graham, pleasantly. "Surely you have not become so suddenly religious as to deem it an indispensable duty. Besides there are other churches nearer."

"I came because it's so dull at home," said Miss Stone, frankly, "it's not a bit like our other Sundays. Papa is asleep, and mamma reading; my tabby cat has run away, and I really couldn't bear it any longer!"

A luckless speech, since Graham was perfectly aware that Mr. Hawtree usually spent Sundays at No. 9, and immediately concluded his absence caused Phyllis's dejection.

"I daresay such a state of things must be rather dismal, yet it isn't always so, I suppose?"

"I hope it won't be; I think many days like this would kill me. I seemed to have lived a week since breakfast time."

"Let us hope you may not have many then. I trust that next Sunday the cat won't run away, Mr. Stone will keep awake, and your mamma not read, then you will be happy."

"I wish you wouldn't laugh at me!"

"Miss Stone, I was never less inclined for merriment."

"Nor I," said Phyllis, sadly. "Well, we must make an effort. How is Mrs. Lambley?"

"Flourishing. It is astonishing how her spirits have improved since Jane married and Scarem went out to the South Sea Islands! She positively only sighs fourteen times a day, and I haven't heard of her little whims for ever so long."

"I wonder she is not anxious about Jane?"

"She is happy in losing her. No one knows how Mrs. Jenkins tyrannised over her mother. By-the-by, do you ever hear anything of the bridal pair?"

"Not directly. I asked a friend of mine yesterday, and he said they were not too happy."

"A most extraordinary remark, Miss Stone; no two people ever yet were too happy in this world!"

"How critical you are. I thought it an excellent description; I understood it at once!"

"Naturally."

"What do you mean?"

"That it is natural you should understand Mr. Hawtree's observations better than I do, since you have the pleasure of his acquaintance and I have not!"

"How did you guess it was Mr. Hawtree?"

"That is my secret."

"You would like him very much if you did know him," said Phyllis, tactlessly. "He is so gay and agreeable, he amuses us all."

Graham lost all patience with her. He could not listen to the praises of the man he called his rival.

"We have not known each other very long, Miss Stone, still I hope you will not refuse to allow me to offer you a friend's congratulations on your engagement!"

Poor Phyllis!

"I am not engaged—that is, I—thank you!—but

"I have been too premature," he said, stiffly.

"Pardon me, I was aware the event had not been publicly announced, still—"

Phyllis did not hear the rest of his speech, and it is very doubtful if he finished it at all.

He walked with her in silence to her gate, raised his hat, apparently did not see her offered hand, and passed on to No. 27.

"Affectation!" he muttered. "I thought she would have been more outspoken."

And after that he did not see her again for a long time, so long that at last he inquired of Mrs. Lambley:

"What has become of Miss Stone? she never comes here now."

"She is not at home, poor dear!" said Mrs. Lambley, in the most commiserating tone of voice.

"Indeed I and when is she to be married?"

"Never, that I know of," cried the widow, full of indignation. "And if a judgment don't fall on that deceiving creature that paid her such attentions and seemed to worship the ground she walked on, why it ought."

"You don't mean that the engagement is off between her and Hawtree?"

"It never was on, so Mrs. Warm's says, and she lives at No. 10, and is Mrs. Stone's best friend—though I must say Phyllis might have been more

open with me herself! The man hasn't been near the place since March, and he went off without proposing!"

"The scoundrel!" muttered Graham, "to deceive a child like her, who believed in everything and everybody!"

"Well," continued Mrs. Lambley, who dearly loved a gossip over her neighbour's doings, "folks do say that Mrs. Stone took it remarkably hard, and being a nasty temper, vented her disappointment on Phyllis; anyhow, she grew tired of being at home, and so she's gone!"

"Run away?" asked Graham, horror-struck.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Lambley, in a tone of delighted mystery, "maybe; anyhow Mrs. Stone will hardly mention her name, though they do say the father gave his consent, and saw her off himself! Dear, dear, it's a thousand pities that wicked creature trifled with her! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if she died!" continued the widow, cheerfully.

"But surely she came to say good-bye to you?"

"No, she didn't; I should never have known she was gone, if Johnson hadn't seen her in a cab with two large boxes labelled 'Miss Stone, passenger.'"

"Passenger! where to?" asked Graham, quickly.

"Oh, Bromley, or Bayewater, or Balham; Johnson wasn't sure which; she doesn't read quickly, but it certainly began with a B!" was the vague reply.

"What's the good of being pretty, when that girl with her baby face and blue eyes goes through so much trouble?"

"The parents ought to have been ashamed of themselves," was the prompt reply; "they should never have let this man come to their house without knowing more about him. They could have found out his character fast enough if only they had taken the trouble to make proper inquiries."

"Well, people say he's enormously rich; the money must have tempted them. They have none to spare themselves, though they have made their house so spick and span!"

"But what is she doing at the place beginning with a B? Who is she with? What is the object of her being there?"

"I don't know!"

"Poor victim of their avarice!"

"Well, as to that," said Mrs. Lambley, who began to find him too desponding even for her. "She's young yet, you know, and though of course it's all very dreadful, still she might get over it!"

But this reflection held not the slightest consolation for George Graham.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

PETROLEUM FOR BALDNESS.—Persons afflicted with baldness will be glad to hear that a luxuriant growth of hair may be produced by a very simple process, described by Consul Stevens in his report on Nicolaef for the past year, which has just been issued. In the summer of 1875 Consul Stevens's attention was drawn to several cases of baldness among bullocks, cows and oxen, and the loss of manes and tails among horses. A former servant of the consul's, prematurely bald, whose duty it was to trim lamps, had a habit of wiping his petroleum-besmeared hands in the scanty locks which remained to him; and after three months of lamp-trimming experience, his dirty habit procured for him a much finer head of glossy black hair than he ever possessed before in his recollection. Struck by this remarkable occurrence, Consul Stevens tried the remedy on two retriever spaniels that had become suddenly bald, with wonderful success. His experience, therefore, induced him to suggest it to the owner of several black cattle affected as above stated, and while it stayed the spread of the disease among animals in the same sheds and stables, it effected a quick and radical cure on the animals attacked. The petroleum should be of the most refined American qualities, rubbed in vigorously and quickly with the palm of the hand, and applied at intervals of three days, six or seven times in all, except in the case of horses' tails and manes, when more applications may be requisite. This news will create a profound sensation in hairdressing circles, particularly among wig and chignon makers.

TWO HARMLESS DOSES THAT MAKE ONE POISON.—Chlorate of potassium and iodide of potassium are both entirely harmless in suitable doses. Furthermore, these two salts do not react upon each other in solution, even at a boiling heat. Yet it has been proved that, when they are administered together, they do combine in the stomach, producing iodate of potassium, which is poisonous. M. Meis has found that dogs could take the chlorate, or iodide, in doses,

from five to seven grammes, with impunity; but that a mixture of the two killed them in a few days, with the symptoms of poisoning by iodate of potassium. This combination must therefore be avoided. Indeed, as a general rule, the chlorate is so unstable and so ready to give up its oxygen, that it cannot be safely combined with any substance capable of oxidation.

A WONDERFUL new invention is whispered about in artistic circles. It is said that by a clever arrangement of photography and lithography, and by means of a new process, a picture can be copied from the original, tint by tint, and almost brushmark by brushmark, and that when the copy is completed you cannot tell which is the original and which the spurious one. In proof of this statement copies of drawings upon wood are being circulated with the grain of the wood almost precisely like the original.

CREMATION is done for. A chemist has discovered a process by which the human body may be reduced to a delightful perfume at a ridiculously small cost, and in an inconceivably short space of time.

A HIGH tide is predicted for the 29th, and though the Metropolitan Board and the Lambeth Vestry are still squabbling as to who shall pay, the Vestry has wisely set to work raising embankments and building new walls to keep the river out.

MESSRS. MAUSER, the inventors of the Mauser rifle, have constructed a pistol on the same principle, and likewise bearing their name, which is now being practically tested in the Prussian army. If approved, it is intended to take the place of the revolver in the hands of officers in the mounted services. It appears that the presentation of an official report on the merits of various kinds of revolvers has been postponed in order to admit of the new pistol being previously tested. Whether the palm be awarded to the pistol or to a species of revolver for the particular purpose in view, the Mauser pistol, which has a grooved barrel, is considered a valuable new type of light firearm. On its behalf it is contended that revolvers are both too complicated in their construction and too little to be relied upon for true shots, and that at best they are superior to the pistol only in a môle, where rapidity of firing is of moment.

But in hand-to-hand fighting it is argued that firearms are out of place. At a distance, when a correct aim is of more importance than quick firing, the pistol is believed to be the more valuable weapon.

SUNKEN VESSELS.—Where a ship has been wrecked and sunk to depths beyond the reach of divers, but remains on a sandy or strong bottom without having fallen over on its side, it may be recovered, M. Toselli thinks, by a method which he describes (with figure) in "La Nature," the means used being a so-called aerhydric chain, consisting of cylinders of strong impermeable cloth connected together by copper tubes; (when inflated they are like a string of large sausages). The engineer who has to direct the work goes down in M. Toselli's marine mole, which he can move about at his will, guided by sight through its windows; and from which he communicates with the vessel above. By his direction a number of automatic grapnels are lowered to the wreck and fix themselves at various points round its circumference. Their ropes terminate above in buoys, and these mark out the position of the ship. Then a stronger grapnel is lowered to some point (say the base of the mast), and with this is connected the aerhydric chain, which the vessel above then commences paying out round the group of buoys, so that it is wound several times round the wreck below. By means of a steam-driven air compression pump the cylinders are inflated, till at length the difference between the weight of this inflated chain, and that of the volume of water displaced by it is sufficient to raise the ship, which may then be brought to port for repairs.

A SNAKE SHOW IN CALCUTTA.

"It was early in the morning—not, however, before the snakes, which were in a series of wire-covered boxes, were awake and lively—that we were shown," says a correspondent, "into a stone-floored room some twenty feet long and twelve broad. In the boxes were the strongest and deadliest snakes in India: pythons, ophiophagi, cobras, korites, Russell snakes, and many others. The Hindoos who had charge of them were two slim, wiry, little men, nude to the waist, as most of their countrymen are. They wore neither gloves nor had any other protection, and had no instrument of any kind in the place.

"After showing the varied collection under their care, they proceeded to open the python cage, and one of them, putting his head in, seized a monster ser-

pent and threw him upon the floor close to our feet. The python objected to such treatment, and began to hiss, making at the same time a vigorous effort to rise. But the snake-keeper was waiting for this, and no sooner did that huge, shining back begin to curve than the keeper put out his hand, and, seizing the creature's tail, pulled it back with a jerk. Instantly the python was powerless—hissing, but unable to move; the more he struggled, the more tenaciously did the keeper hold his tail, explaining meanwhile that so long as the reptile was controlled in that fashion there was no danger of its doing mischief; then, just as its rage was becoming ungovernable, the man lifted it quickly, and with a jerk deposited it in the box. Its companion was taken out in a similar manner, and slapped and buffeted till, throughout its entire length, some twelve feet, it quivered with passion, but all to no purpose; it, too, was replaced in the cage, and shut up to his at its leisure.

"The fact that an ophiophagus is in the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, London, rendered the next exhibition more interesting, although it may be doubted whether the sudden throwing into so small a room of a snake seven feet long was agreeable to the visitors. However, there was really no danger, for the venomous creature was so completely in its keeper's power that we had no occasion to fear. One bite from the reptile and any one of us would have been dead in five minutes, for it was exceptionally strong and lively; but it was no more able to bite us than the little mongoose caged outside the door. Up rose its head, out came its slithering tongue, its eyes dilated, its huge throat swelled, and all seemed ready for a desperate attack, when the keeper struck the reptile's mouth with the back of his hand, and before it could strike him, had seized it just under the head. Then it struggled, but only to get away—it had met that native before, and did not at all approve of his treatment. Its tongue might move in and out as often as it pleased, but all to no purpose; and when the cage was opened, it slunk in."

THE prospects of Dark Blue at the coming race are by no means bright. Towing path there none; the whole country round is a broad lake; in fact, the last new joke is to call Oxford "Spire and Pond." By way of aggravating the situation there is a dam running three-fourths of the way across the stream, whereby a regular mill race is created and navigation rendered perilous, especially to smaller craft, when the Eights are sweeping down. There are some seventeen or eighteen of these, and the "coaches" spare neither voice nor language. Meanwhile the late plague of rain and immoderate waters prevents any coaching from the bank, which is so essential to success.

THE THREE VALENTINES OF VERNON GRANGE.

A STORY WITH A MORAL. IN THREE
CHAPTERS.

(FOR THE LONDON READER.)

CHAPTER III.

CONCLUSION.

TWENTY years have rolled away, with little change to Daisybourne; but how great the changes among the nithful company who drew partners on St. Valentine's lottery, twenty-four years ago, in the great hall of Vernon Grange!

Good Mrs. Bland rests peacefully beneath the great churchyard yew-tree, her pleasant memory occasionally recalled by the older servants at the Hall, when recurring festivals awaken recollections of her maternal rule which made service pleasure.

A less pleasant personage, too, had, as his somewhat lofty and ostentatious tombstone, adorned with a chubby cherub and palm-branches, standing clear beside the church entry told us, "departed this life." This was, so said the ep'taph:

EPHRAIM EBENEZER JARVIS, of this parish. A kind parent and exemplary husband, to whose memory this stone is erected by his sorrowing relief:

"He's gone before, where all must go,
And left us here to grief and woe."

All this, out of the stonecutter's own head, was done at the expense of Martha, who administered to Ephraim Jarvis's worldly estate and effects, which were pretty considerable, and who, having sold the goodwill and business for a few hundreds to an enterprising mercer, had now retired to a pretty little private house.

Here, in company with half a dozen congenial cats, a spiteful parrot, and a misanthropic marmoset monkey, did Martha spend her days in scandal, tea, feeding, and nursing her four-footed and feathered pets, and starving and illusing the unlucky servant wench who, for the time being (seldom more than three months) had the misfortune to be driven by necessity to take her scanty wages.

As to poor Millicent, whose patrimony she had appropriated, we shall record her fortunes in the proper place.

There is a spacious mansion recently erected on the brow of an eminence a mile out of Daisybourne, on the Station road. A pillared and pedimented portico forms the centre of two pillastered and stuccoed wings, with many windows, surmounted by bold cornices and balustrades, and so elaborately ornamented with sculpture as to be at once heavy and tasteless. Still, it was what the architect called "an imposing fabric."

The village was rife with gossip about the magnificence of its as-yet-unfinished suites of drawing-rooms, ante-rooms, reception-rooms, picture-gallery, and outbuildings, which, according to the describers, "made the Old Grange look like nothing at all." We may pity their taste, as we have already described the fine ancestral home of the Vernons, and decline the task of contrast or comparison. Trains of contractors' carts were carrying and shooting ballast on the new roads forming all over the once grassy eminence, and troops of navvies were at work in the newly-formed park. And for whom was all this toil and labour? We shall see.

Jonathan Brinsley no longer dwelt in the six-roomed villa in Chorlton Road. He had prospered exceedingly, and now ranked with the magnates of the land. Indeed a book had been written, wherein Jonathan was praised with fulsome adulation among "self-made men," and as "the architect of his own fortune."

We left Jonathan, Brinsley principal clerk in a Manchester paper factory. Now it so happened that among his duties Jonathan paid frequent visits to the port of Liverpool to purchase material for the mills; his punctuality, diligence and shrewdness had made him well known and respected among the merchants, and his position was supposed to point to a junior partnership in the firm which employed him, but his chief was a niggard and a money grubber, and Jonathan dearly felt that his services were inadequately remunerated.

At this time foreign rags, the principal stay of the paper manufacture, became scarce and ruinously dear. On one of his journeys a merchant called Jonathan aside, and asked his opinion of a sample of an important fabric, informing him that a grass, of which he exhibited a sample, was the staple of its manufacture. Jonathan perceived and criticised its defects in colour, make, and coarseness, but while condemning its imperfections took care to push his inquiries as to price, place of production, and the quantity procurable. Satisfied on these points he took home the specimens, and for many a thoughtful night and busy day occupied himself in experiments upon bleaching, macerating and preparing the new vegetable fibre. He saw golden visions of success; obtained, as his high character for probity easily enabled him to do, the assistance of a large capitalist, and, to the surprise and chagrin of his employers, respectfully left their service, the possessor of a patent, and the proprietor of a new milland machinery which soon earned its tens of thousands per annum for the now flourishing firm of Brinsley and Co.

In due time, for all prospered with Jonathan, his pile of warehouses and range of counting-houses were among the largest in Manchester, where such commercial concerns most abound. He was successively a town councillor, alderman, mayor; and in this office his lady, the erstwhile Martha Langdale of our story, now a portly matron, was led out by a noble duke for the first dance at a state ball, while Jonathan entertained royalty, in the person of the Prince Consort, at a state dinner in the Town Hall on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of a

public hospital, whereof Sir Jonathan Brinsley (for the honour of knighthood followed quickly) was vice-president, his royal guest being patron and first president of the noble charity.

Shakespeare says: "Some men are born great, others achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them."

Despite the laudation of the biographer of Sir Jonathan we demur, and were not cynical, to placing him in the first or second category of great men. Jonathan's greatness came of his wealth and his wealth alone; for although he was honest, upright, and perhaps just in all his dealings, he was not at heart liberal, generous, sympathetic, kind, or, in its true sense, benevolent.

However, the balance in his own bank (he was a director) enabled him to write down a larger sum after his name than any but a millionaire could dare to give on occasions of advertised subscription lists.

Martha was a good woman, so far as her nature went. She rejoiced, and was proud of her husband's success, performed her duties as the mother of a family with scrupulous care; yet she soon, in her husband's esteem, rose to the purse-proud dignity which he thought becoming to the lady of Sir Jonathan Brinsley.

In fact, as they grew older, "my lady" devoted herself to the exclusive care of her large household and her children. This to Sir Jonathan, whose self-esteem and self-belief became truly Pecksniffian, as continuous success inflated him with the belief that fortune was at his command from his superior gifts and functions, became first irksome, then provoking, and, at last, intolerable.

He began to look upon Martha as a mere clog, incapable of refining and sublimating into the helpmeet and glory-sharer of so great a man. Nay, his arrogance was mortified that the adulation and golden self-worship which he received from sycophants and time-servers, was changed when he went home to calm and fair appreciation of the power and value of excessive wealth, and he himself talked to as in the days when he was collecting clerk and buyer to a now second-rate firm.

He did not believe that Jonathan Brinsley, the clerk, and Sir Jonathan, the bank-director, etc., etc., were the same person, which, unluckily, Martha never lost sight of.

Hence Sir Jonathan, whose ostentatious pride was insatiable, became formally and studiously polite. My lady, too, presided stiffly at the plate-loaded dinner-table, retired with the viands, received her husband's guests formally in the drawing-room, and bade them good night at an early hour to visit the governess's room, and go thence to her separate chamber.

Sir Jonathan himself repaired to his own apartment, as became so great a personage, in solitary dignity, save the accompaniment of a powdered lacquey, who bore a silver candelabrum with wax lights. We had forgot, he had also a frequent companion, which did not improve his amiability, in a sharp twinge of gout as a reminder of calipash and calipao, and the old port of many a corporation feast.

And thus, though no outward sign betrayed it to the world, their cool estrangement hung by a slender thread of duty, instead of the lifelong bond of wedded love.

And the large house on the hill was to be the future almost palatial residence of the Brinsleys, where, in splendid luxury, and amid all the enjoyments that unbounded wealth can purchase, dwelt the parvenu millionaire, and his unambitious lady in unloving incompatibility.

There is a clematis-covered cottage in a winding dell, from the rustic porch of which you can see, through the lofty elms dotted with rooks' nests, the great, staring, white structure of Brinsley Hall. If you turn your gaze in another direction, from the same stand-point, you may descry, following the line of the browner beeches, the curling smoke and the twisted chimneys of the battlemented and gabled old mansion of Vernon Grange.

At the door sits a "sonsie-checked" female, who may have seen some thirty or thirty-four summers, but quite belies the idea of forty-one having shone on the aureole's wreath parted on her full forehead, and escaping behind in knots and curling locks down her unbowed neck, as scorning the restraint of the small saucer cap and binding riband that ineffectually strive to confine them.

She is busied at her spinning-wheel with the old-fashioned distaff, and as the whirr of the simple machine goes on, she occasionally releases her right hand. This is for the purpose of giving a renewed rook to a wicker cradle by her side, wherein slum-

bers a boy-baby that must have gained first prize at William Holland's Woolwich show had such exhibitions then been.

But hark! a sweet voice, with a savour rather of "woodnotes wild" than the "portamento da voce," inculcated by a Garcia, a Crivelli, or a Strakosch, breaks upon the summer air:

"Who'll come with me to the woods, among
The oaks with ivy overhung?
Who'll come with me where cowslips grow,
And yellow primrose flowers do glow?"

"There the redbreast hops along,
And cheers the traveller with his song;
There the woodpecker screams so shrill,
And taps the tree with sounding bill."

"There the jays their clamours make,
There the hare starts from the brake;
And from well-trod stubbles nigh
Is heard the gun and plovers' cry."

"Tis here I'd live where I'd die,
Blest with his love and—"

"Hillo! hillo!" sounded through the wood, and five or six, there might be seven, curly-headed youngsters rushed out of the cottage with such irrepressible glee that they nearly upset their mother's spinning-wheel, together with "baby, cradle and all," had it not been for Dolly Armstrong's securing hand.

"Hoity! toity! children! are you all mad? Where's your manners you learnt at school?"

There was no more question, for at that moment came in sight Dolly Armstrong's eldest boy, a stalwart youth of eighteen, verging close upon manhood, and well nigh of the stature and good looks of his father and damask, when he led his mother up the aisle of Baisbourne church. He had promised a whole rabbit-skin to each of his four sisters to "wrap baby bunting in," and behold, that number of milk-white little burrowers hang noses downward in his left hand.

"Whatever can that Lawyer Sheepskin want w' your father, Robin? He's been up here since you went out, and he's so precious full o' secrets, and winks and nods, yere can never make him out rightly. He says there's all sorts o' good luck in store for me, but I told him I didn't much care about the luck nor the money that was got by lawsuits; and he laughed and said I was just right."

"I'll just step down to the village," said Robin. "Ay, do," said his mother, and see about what it is, for Dolly was not without a spice of woman's curiosity.

The young man fired his gun in the air, at which the smaller fry shouted, and depositing it in the gun-rack strode away to the village, first fortified by a glass of home-brewed. There he found unwonted commotion. Lawyer Sheepskin had perused the very brief will whereby old Simon Westrop had left his granddaughter and her husband coheirs in the cottage wherein he lived and died, and a similar one next door, for Dolly and her husband felt duly grateful, and had mourned the worthy octogenarian so long as one suit of funeral black lasted.

But the cottage was infirm, like its late owner, and a thorough new thatch was required. The straw was brought, and the skilful roof-layer begun his work of stripping the old stuff.

Scarcely had he cast down a few bundles to the utter scament and dialoguing of all sorts of mice, beetles, and spiders, when beneath the broad eaves he found a small, square, flatish tin box. It was scoured outside with a small letter padlock, which defied his ingenuity to unfasten.

Joe Wopstraw set off with his prize to the lawyer's, as the authority to advise in a case of "treasure trove." On his way he looked in at the public-house, and, like many of his betters, discounted his reward by paying for and drinking a mug of beer. The consequence was, a strong escort of rustics, who had a thirty presentiment of a reward which would oblige Johnny Wopstraw to stand a drink all round. Lawyer Sheepskin received the box as a customary right, declaring it part of the estate and effects of the deceased sexton, and, to the great disgust of the thrifty crowd, and the intense mortification of Wopstraw informed him and them of the severe penalties of the law to which they would be liable had they meddled with, concealed, or made away with, any property so found.

"And be I to have noot for finding o't?" asked Johnny, with an injured air.

"That's as it may be, young man. At present it is fortunate you have acted honestly, or to-morrow might have seen you in the county gaol."

Johnny Wopstraw almost wished he had traded the terrors of the law as he heard the growl of

"Shame" from the throats of his mates, coupled with very strong declarations that the speakers "would ha' seen the la'yer hanged afore he shud ha' had without gettin' o' summat."

These, however, were soon silenced by a yet more emphatic declaration of the law in such cases made and provided, coupled with a soothing declaration that the box, which belonged to Robin Armstrong, could only be opened in his presence.

"And you know, my men," said the lawyer, with cheap generosity, "what a good fellow he is if any does him a good turn."

A short pause brought the matter clearly to their slow comprehensions, and with an "aye, aye, be sure the la'yer knows best," and a hearty cheer for good luck to Robin, and then, at a signal from their leader, "another for Dolly!" and yet again "another for the kids!" off went the crowd satisfied that Robin, "if he had any luck, wud do the thing as is wight."

These visitors got rid of, we regret to say that the high-talking Mr. Sheepskin "Was, could he help it, a special attorney," so he cogitated and turned and turned the brass rings of the letter-lock. "O-p-e-n," "S-h-u-t," as a reverse; "L-o-c-k," "S-i-m-o-n," "W-e-s-t-r-o-p," but no! the heap was fast as ever. "R-o-b-i-n," it was certainly looser; a bright thought struck him, the short "A" it was looser still. Had Lawyer Sheepskin been a Greek he would have been ready to cry "Eureka!" but being merely a Yorkshireman he muttered half an oath that "he'd got it," and turning round the letters forming "D-o-l-l-y," the brass cylinder fell on his writing-table.

The contents were few: a thin red book, with "Muggleton Savings Bank" in gold letters, containing pages of small sums with dates, each page crossed out when added up to thirty pounds, while an equal number of certificates of paying in to the Bank of England, and of warrant entitling holder to £3 16s. 8d. per cent. per annum, greeted his eyes.

The signatures of the legatees, whose names were endorsed on the book as "My dear children Dolly and Robin Armstrong," was all that was required to effect the transfer of the property and cash balance to his clients.

The rings were replaced, but as it had now become dusk, and the law must move slowly, Mr. Sheepskin determined to ponder over his proceedings, and it was thus nearly upon the next day when he paid his mysterious visit to the gamekeeper's cottage with a Joseph-Adze-like announcement of being able to disclose "something to your advantage," and, of course, to his own profit.

The cash balance of some seventeen pounds ten in the box, Lawyer Sheepskin had just handed to the surprised Robin Armstrong, when Robin the younger arrived, and to him also was communicated the astounding fact that her Majesty's Commissioners for Reducing the National Debt held about a van-hundred pounds (and interest) which they would pay over to Robin and Dolly, upon his Robin's sole signature; adding some gibberish about her being a feme covert, without settlement of dowry, and therefore "incapable." All which sorely puzzled poor Robin, who had never the slightest suspicion that his better half was "incapable" of anything, either in law or love, and who was yet more dumfounded at hearing she was classed by the law with "infants, outlaws, and lunatics."

Nevertheless, the money was got, and straightway invested by Sheepskin in Consols, in trust to Robin and to his wife for their joint and separate lives, with remainder over to their lawful children.

So they were as happy as the day is long; Robin's pay and perquisites was ample for their modest wants, and with a surplus which they did not diminish but slightly increased, the balance of riches might fairly be struck in favour of Woodbine Cottage as against Brinsley Hall.

Last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history.

SHAKESPEARE.

In a dingy mow, down a dirty lane, leading laterally out of an old West-end square, once the mansions of the crème de la crème of society, and still exhibiting the tarnished glories of their former magnificence, stands a dirty beer-shop, once a public-house, the resort of the rating and dog-fighting fraternity, and the miscalled sporting men among the servants of the neighbouring aristocracy.

We have seen Joe Straps, the sweetheart of the St. John's Wood "slaves," in the service of the Hon. Spencely, years since Earl of Dashwood.

Joe Straps has jilted Self, and, emptied by the bribe of one thousand pounds and a business, has married his erstwhile master's mistress.

Debased by drink, torn by remorse, demented by passion, poor Millicent Jarvis, after twice forfeiting her small annuity by importing his vengeful lordship, accepted Joe's insidious proffer to "make her an honest woman." The indissoluble knot was tied, Joe was installed in the Windmill, of which he soon lost the spirit license, and changed its title to the Dog Billy, where he sold bad beer and "jiggered" gin to so desperate a set of ruffians, that he was actually interfered with by the police, except when some daring exciseman got him fined ten pounds for illicit trading.

Such dens as Joe Straps' are now impossible, but at the time we write of, whatever the control over public-houses, the license "to sell beer to be drunk on the premises"—we had almost written "and to be drunk"—was to be had by a mere money payment to the Excise.

This den, reeking with the fumes of stale tobacco, spilt beer and sawdust, and yet viler odours, was the domicile of the once beautiful Millicent Jarvis, the pride of Daisybourne. For a short time after her entry on the house, Millicent was known as the "dashing landlady," and on one occasion, in full fashionable costume, she ran down to Daisybourne, impelled partly by vanity, and incited thereto by her greedy husband, to whom she often enlarged upon her father's respectability and wealth.

Her arrival was soon known, and before she had time to write a letter in a private room at the Vernon Arms Millicent Searle had been recognised, despite her veil, and Mrs. Jarvis the second was fully prepared for her coming. Her ingenuity rose with the occasion.

After an unusual bustle she discovered that the needed "persian" for lining Mrs. Golightly's cloak was not in stock, and that excellent customer must have it on Sunday. What was to be done? She must herself set off for Muggleton, as there alone could the needful be obtained.

Forbid it gallantry, and also economy, for she threatened a "fly" from the Vernon Arms. So, Ephraim Jarvis went off out at the opposite end of the village, while the veiled Mrs. Straps made her way down the High-street, and into the paternal shop, bearing with her the propitiatory letter, asking her father's forgiveness.

The boy was purposely placed in her way, and deceived by his answer, she handed him the momentous letter. After ten minutes of suspense, wherein Mrs. Martha Jarvis spelt and respect its contents, the youth returned with a verbal message to the effect that the bearer was to return to the Vernon Arms, there to await the answer.

Armed with her special certificate, the wrathful Martha was not long behind poor Millicent. The denouement was startling. Backed by the landlady, by the whole of the females present, and amid the indignation of the outsiders, Millicent was driven from the Vernon Arms, and ultimately from the village; Martha, on behalf of her husband, declaring she should never "darken their doors again."

Millicent Jarvis made one more experiment on her father, but her letter came back with a couple of "P.S.s," one from papa, disinheriting her for disobedience, the second from her delectable stepmother, promising a like fate to all future missions, with the exception that they would be unopened, for the edification of the Post-office authorities.

Millicent's course was now downward, but why trace its melancholy details. Her husband grew day by day more brutal, and his frequent resorts to violence were notorious in the neighbourhood, the once pretty Millicent being seldom without an additional black-eye.

Down, down, lower in the scale, her husband was ejected by the brewer, and they were forced to hide their misery in the loft of one of the stables down the mews, while Joe eked out a prolonged starvation, attenuated by debauches in gin, by helping the groom, leading horses, and an occasional hit at low gambling, wherein the ex-beershop-keeper was an adept.

At last came a night when, infuriated by drink and a pecuniary loss, and storing up a fiendish jealousy, her husband levelled her with a stable-fork. In the morning he was in custody, and his wife found stupefied and bleeding at the foot of a step-ladder, was carried on a stretcher to the hospital.

The poor wretch had often screened the brutal villain from the law, but the injuries were now too serious. Joe Straps was committed for six months and hard labour, and Millicent's death had no other notice than the brief paragraph of a penny-a-liner:

"The unfortunate woman who was so seriously injured by her husband on Sunday-night week, expired in — Hospital on Thursday evening. An inquest will be held."

And it was held; when, owing to medical evidence

of the state of the brain and liver of the deceased, her rascal husband escaped any severer punishment, the verdict being, "That the deceased died of serious apoplexy and liver disease induced by drunkenness, and aggravated by exposure to cold." Her remains were returned to the workhouse mortuary unclaimed, and the place of her grave is unknown.

Our story of "The Three Valentines" is told, and from it we draw the obvious moral. Let not superior beauty arrogate for its skin-deep and fading attractions the lasting love which is founded on far other attributes.

Let the woman first respect herself, next be sure that her lover respects her, and lastly, feel that she can respect and love him. The rest will follow; there is in every woman's heart a yearning love, an instinct to be united to the object of its preference. Woe if that preference is based on aught but chaste desire, and the trust which women must put in men's fidelity and truth.

Sensual passion is the true slayer of enduring love, and here we will cease our moralising, as such must be useless to those who cannot read the moral of "The Three Valentines" between the lines.

"Beauty or wealth to few are given,
But ask how just the ways of Heaven,
True joy to all is free.
Nor wealth nor science grant the boon,
'Tis thine, oh, conscience, thine alone,
All joy is drawn from thee.

So spake my soul; my heart replied,
"How poor, how blind is human pride:
All joy how false and vain;
Save that from conscious duty flows,
Which gives the deathbed sweet repose,
And hopes an after-reign."

THE END

SEARCH FOR WIVES.—Where do men usually discover the women who afterward become their wives? is the question we have occasionally heard discussed, and the result it invariably comes to is worth mentioning to our young lady readers. Chance has much to do in the affair; but then there are important governing circumstances. It is certain that few men make a selection from ball-rooms, or any other place of public gaiety; and nearly as few are influenced by what may be called showing off in the streets, or any allurement of dress. Our conviction is that ninety-nine hundredths of all the finery with which the women decorate or load their persons, go for nothing, as far as husband-catching is concerned. Where and how, then, do men find their wives? In the quiet homes of their parents or guardians—at the fireside where the domestic graces and feelings are alone demonstrated. These are charms which most surely attract the high as well as the humble. Against those all the finery and airs in the world sink into insignificance.

A FREE VINTNER.

NOTORIETY is not exactly celebrity, else we might affix the epithet "celebrated" to that enterprising wine merchant who sent out unasked a number of Christmas hampers, and whose clerk in every case unaccountably omitted to post a letter notifying the despatch of the package in question. Hitherto, this famous "free vintner" has kept himself modestly in the background; he has not replied to any of the gentlemen who tested the merits of his champagne, and who afterwards wrote to the papers concerning his deeds, and all we know about him publicly is that he carries on business in the City.

But he would now confer a great favour on newspaper readers if he were to make a profit-and-loss account of this special branch of his Christmas trade. How many people, we should like to know, cashed up handsomely, in spite of their disappointment on finding that the champagne did not emanate from that good, generous, Uncle Dick, but from a sharp tradesman who expected to be paid for it? How many people, on the other hand, acted like those two clergymen who have communicated to the public press their gallant resolve to pay nothing for wine which had been foisted so surreptitiously upon them? Will the profit exceed the loss, and if so, will the enterprising purveyor repeat the "same old game" next winter?

At all events, we shall fight rather shy of anonymous presents, and when Uncle Dick sends us the next hamper of wine, game, fish, banknotes, or whatever may be the contents, we beg him to accompany the gift with an autograph letter.

RICHARD PEMBERTON;

—OR—

THE SELF-MADE JUDGE.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE incident mentioned in the previous chapter happened upon a glorious afternoon in October. Falconer and Sylvia went out for a walk, and taking the circuitous path above the cottages, ascended the mountain-top to its highest point and came out upon a projection that overhung Silver Creek, the latter twining like a glittering serpent at its base.

At the first glance down from its dizzy heights, her head reeled, her eyes failed, and she clung trembling to her brother's arm for support.

Falconer seated himself by her side, but his eyes roved far away over the grand and glorious panorama of hills and valleys, clothed in glorious autumnal foliage, streams, lakes, waterfalls, and distant ranges of blue mountains, with the sunset cloud beyond them outflung like the oriflame of retiring day.

As the boy gazed, his eye and soul kindled to the theme, and exclaiming partly to himself, partly to his companion:

"Here is an effect of light and shade! a culmination of glory that may not happen again in a thousand years!"

He seized his portfolio, and hastily throwing it open, selected his materials, and began to sketch rapidly, that no evanescent shadow of a sailing purple cloud upon the mountain, nor glancing ray of crimson light between the hills, might vanish before it was made immortal. For even so felt the boy-artist in his enthusiasm.

And so he worked away, Maud sitting forgotten by his side, yet strongly interested, and glancing whenever she could do so without interrupting him, over his shoulder at the progress of his work until the sketch was finished and the gorgeous glory had faded from the west. Then the boy arose, with the glow still upon his cheek, placed the drawing in his portfolio and closed it, replying to Maud's eager look:

"You shall see to-morrow, Sylvia, I have to touch it up a little, and some of these days, when I can get the material and skill, I mean to copy that on a large scale in oil. I wouldn't take anything in the world for this sketch, Sylvia," he said, speaking at once under the influence of the artist's enthusiasm and the boy's recklessness of assertion.

But at the same moment—and how it happened he never could tell—as he stooped to help his sister up, the portfolio twitched itself out of his hand and with one or two pitches and rebounds tumbled down the precipice.

The boy stood aghast.

Reader, if your pocket-book with all your fortune had dropped into the sea you could not have felt more ruined than he did. The portfolio was all his treasure and it was gone. He did not speak a word nor move an inch for a full minute.

Maud, with her face full of trouble, stood watching him. She spoke first and hopefully:

"Maybe it fell all the way to the bottom, and if it did we can get it again, for you know the creek is low now."

"I'll see," said Falconer, with new hope lighting up his face, and he got down on his hands and knees, stretched his head over the shelving rock, and looked down—Maud watching him almost breathlessly. Soon he drew back his head, got upon his feet, and said with a despairing cry:

"No, it is just where it never can be got at. It has lodged in a bush about half way down the precipice."

Maud went down upon her hands and knees, crept to the edge of the steep, and looked over.

"Come away, Sylvia, you'll fall," exclaimed the boy, going after her and helping her up. "Don't do that again, Sylvia. It never makes me dizzy to look down a precipice, but it makes me sick to see you at its edge."

"Could anyone go down and get it, Falconer?" "Could anyone go down? Yes, you could, and you will, too, if you lean so far over another time."

"I mean, could anyone climb down and get it?" "Anyone climb down? Yes, and never come back again."

"I know it looks dreadful!" "It is gone, Sylvia, lost! My portfolio is lost!"

"And you said you would not take the world—I

mean anything in the world—for that sketch, and that was only one, and the portfolio was full of them."

"It is no use to talk about that now, Sylvia, it is gone," said the boy, with a deep sigh.

"And if it hadn't been for helping me up you would not have dropped it?"

"Never mind, Sylvia, it was not your fault; it was my own carelessness."

"Oh, but you set so much store by it, and I see how you look, too," said Maud, wiping her eyes, "and I know that your sketches are gone, and your pencils and India-rubber, and all your drawing paper, and I know how hard it is to get them, and Big Len won't be going to town till he carries the Christmas turkeys to market."

They left the mountain, and descending by the same circuitous path, reached the cottage by supper time.

But the next morning when the family assembled to family prayer, Maud was missed, and to Ellen's question as to whether anyone had seen Sylvia, old Marian said she had seen her take her bonnet and run out of the cottage gate more than an hour before, and that was just after the child had left her mother's bedroom.

They waited a little while without anxiety for Sylvia to return; but she came not. They sat down to breakfast in the momentary expectation of the child's reappearance. But breakfast was finished and still she came not, and Ellen grew anxious and ran out to meet Big Len, whom she saw approaching the house.

"Len, have you seen anything of Sylvia this morning?"

"Yes, I seen her gwine along under the mountain airly this morning."

"What a child to go off nutting before breakfast," said Ellen, relieved of her anxiety, but feeling much vexation.

But Falconer O'Donovan had heard with a changing cheek, and now snatching his hat he rushed off breathless towards the base of the hill, from the top of which he had dropped his portfolio. His narrow, difficult dangerous path lay between the creek and the foot of the mountain ridge. It was a path along which he usually picked his way with the greatest care, holding by the saplings, but now he ran on heedless of danger—now almost in the water—now torn by thorn bushes—now swinging himself by the aid of an over-hanging sapling around a projecting crag, and anxious only to reach his destination.

He reached the spot at last—the base of that awful column of rocks. He looked up. At first he could see nothing but the gray rugged face of the rock, with only the saplings and thorn bushes growing here and there from its fissures, and then—oh heavens, yes—there was Maud about two thirds-up the ascent.

An intervening bush had momentarily concealed her from his view, but now there she was. The sight of her—of her supreme peril—nearly felled him to the ground, he reeled as under a blow. There she was clambering up, her eyes lifted to the top of the mountain, the precious portfolio for which she had recklessly perilled her life safe in her apron, the corners of which were held together between her teeth, while she used her hands and feet in climbing, fixing each step firmly upon some little projecting fragment, and holding carefully by the thorn bushes and saplings that grew from the frequent fissures. It was well for her that the face of the precipice was so broken and rugged, and that the bushes were so numerous, else might she never have reached the top in safety.

As the boy watched her it seemed as if the very hand of death had clutched his heart and stopped his pulses. He was utterly powerless to aid her. An army could not have aided her, no human power could have helped her. As in breathless prayer he watched her fearful ascent, he saw that though her cheeks were blanched with terror, her eyes were resolutely upward, still upward; at length she gained the brow of the precipice, he saw her clamber over it in safety and then disappear. He thought she had fallen—fainted—when her safety was secured. He was near fainting himself with the rushing reaction.

But he controlled himself by a powerful effort, and turned and fled up a winding path that led up the mountain; quickly he reached the mountain top, and rushed up to the brow of that precipice. Yes—there she lay, fainting sure enough, beside her nearly fatal portfolio; in a furious fit of anger against the insensible object for which she had perilled her life, the boy seized the portfolio, hurled it flying over the precipice, and then caught his sister up in his arms and burst into such a passion of tears as only a boy like him could shed. Maud was not insensible—only

fainting—drooping—and her first question was:

"Why, Falconer, what's the matter? The portfolio is safe."

"Oh!"

That was all he said, but it came with a tone as if some one had speared him.

"Let's go home," said Maud, gently disengaging herself, but still trembling slightly.

"Sit down, Sylvia, you are too weak yet. Oh why did you climb the precipice?"

"To get the portfolio," answered Maud, simply.

"But, good heavens, didn't you know the danger?"

"Yes, but it wasn't half so bad as anyone would think to look at it, there were so many bushes to hold by."

"But gracious me, child, to think of it. Weren't you afraid?"

"Yes, I was scared all but to death when I got up very high; but you know I couldn't go back, so that was the reason why I never looked down, and because I heard Big Len say that if anyone climbing up the dangerous height looked down they'd be almost sure to fall, so though I was dreadfully frightened, I looked up all the time, and here I am safe."

"Well, then, what in the name of sense did you go for?"

"To get the portfolio. Where is it?"

"Never mind the portfolio, I picked it up," said Falconer, repenting that in a fit of passion he had thrown away the treasure for which she had perilled her life; and he took his sister's hand and led her down the mountain by the safe, winding path to the cottage.

They reached home and found Ellen by the parlor fire knitting very comely, with a bowl of milk covered to keep warm for the little trout.

"You must not go out nutting again before breakfast, my dear," she said, as she arose and set the milk and bread upon the table.

It was a beautiful October morning, and even while the bright little fire was burning gaily on the hearth, the front south door and window were open, letting in the warm, refulgent sunlight, and the beautiful landscape, first the little front yard, with its late roses and bright coloured dahlias, chrysanthemums and marigolds, and the winding creek below reflecting in its mirror-like water the dark and gorgeous wooded hills opposite.

Falconer took his Plutarch and seated himself at one of the windows to read, but full often his eyes would wander from the printed volume to Nature's glorious one.

"Old Marian is not here to wait on you this morning."

"Where is she?" asked Maud.

"I sent her to Mr. Ipsey's to see if he had brought the geography and atlas I asked him to buy for you when he went to town."

"Oh!"

"I hope she will get it, for then we can begin studying to-day."

Suddenly the sunlight in the doorway was darkened, and old Marian stood there, but oh, such a figure!

Her gown and petticoats maddly up to her knees, her old black-satin bonnet crushed down over her face, and her nose and her eyes, what could be seen or guessed of them under the rims of the bonnet, fiery red with rage.

They all looked up and gazed at her in astonishment.

"Yes, you may stare wid all de eyes you has, you may. But I've come for justice on to dat dere young rip'rate, I has," she exclaimed, shaking her fist furiously at Mrs. O'Donovan's son and heir.

"Me?" exclaimed Falconer, looking up from his book, as in a dream.

"Yas,—you, you—your good-for-nothing, disreputable, ripp'rate, you! You tink I didn't know nuffin 'tall about its bein' of you, you bidin', seekin', way-layin', highway robber, bandit, you."

"Why, what on earth has he been doing?" asked Ellen, in amazement.

"What hez he been a doin' of? Look at my bonnet."

"But how did it happen?"

"He knows how it happened, of a tiresome, aggrawaken young 'sassinator. He went an' huv dis yer ole side saddle o' a pocket-book on my head, as I was a passin' underneath o' de hill, an' leetle more to knocked my brains out."

And with this consistent and satisfactory description she contemptuously flung Falconer's unlucky portfolio on the floor.

The boy sprang with joy to seize his restored prize, and now understanding the whole drift of the charge, went into an inextinguishable fit of laughter, which kindled the old woman's rage to fury.

"Oh, Marian, how can you talk so? You have no respect for yourself, and no consideration for my feelings. If Falconer has—"

"No consideration for your feelin's. 'Sider my bonnet, 'sider my bonnet, as was my 'spectable ole mudder's afore me."

"I do consider it, and you shall have a new one."

And Marian took off her crushed bonnet and sat down, and fairly wept. But Maud came and gently slipped it from her hands and began to straighten the best wires.

Ellen said:

"I cannot think that Falconer has wantonly injured you, and if he has he shall make you full reparation. Falconer, can you explain your conduct?"

"Yes, mother," answered the boy, pausing in his laughter and, going up to the old woman, he asked:

"Aunt Marian, did you ever know me to do any one an ill turn or you a trick in all my life?"

"Not afore; you no business to begin now."

"And I haven't done it now, Aunt Marian. I threw the portfolio over the precipice because I was vexed. But I didn't know that anyone was under it, much less you. And now to explain it I must tell you a little story," he concluded, glancing affectionately at his sister.

And Falconer commenced and related the whole adventure of the lost portfolio, with his sister's daring escalade for its recovery and his own rash passion in again throwing away the restored treasure. Old Marian listened with many a grunt and groan, and many an anxious "humph," as she anxiously shifted her head from resting first upon one hand and then upon the other.

Ellen heard with a pale cheek and breathless silence. And when her son had finished, and while his eagle eye was still flashing with excitement, she called the girl and boy to her side, and embracing Maud with one arm while she smoothed back her lustrous ringlets from her face, she said:

"Oh, my dear child, promise me you will never do such a thing again."

"I never will, indeed, if it hurts you so. How white your face is and how cold your hands are. Were you so scared about me?" asked Maud, tenderly embracing her friend.

"Oh, my love, I think I shall never feel a peaceful moment again when you are out of my sight," replied Mrs. O'Donovan, pressing the child closer to her bosom.

"Don't be afraid. I promise you never to do so again."

"My poor little lamb. Weren't you frightened to death at such a venture?"

"Indeed I was. When I got up so high I trembled so that I almost let go my hold of the bushes; but I wouldn't look down; I looked up always, and so I got up safe."

Ellen still held her closely clasped with one arm while she sank into thought. At last she said:

"My dear children, I want you to observe and remember this—it will be serviceable to you in the future—that in the moral and Christian life there is just such a mount, from which, if you look down, you are almost sure to fall, upon which the only safety is upward and upward. And, my dear Falconer, recollect this too, that even after such a victory the dear bought prize may, in a single instant of rashness or passion, be cast to the winds."

And Ellen, having deduced her own little moral which certainly might have been more clearly illustrated, dismissed the boy and girl and resumed her knitting. Falconer returned to his book, by the window, and Maud, having straightened and brushed the "spectable bonnet," restored it to the owner, who turned it about in her hands, saying:

"Why, who'd o' t'ought it. It's as straight as it wur afore an' a great deal more cleaner."

And so chattering the old woman crossed the room and patted the head of the laughing youth and called him "a fine boy and a credit to the family." And then she gave Ellen the geography and atlas she had brought from Mr. Ipsey's, and saying she would "have to put on a dry coat and see arter dinner," left the room.

And Ellen opened the parcel, and her little pupil was soon engaged in the new world that the new books opened to her view.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Miss ELLEN, I met Mr. Ipsey as I was coming over from the mill this morning an' he 'quest of me to 'form you how he do hisself the pleasure of waiting on you this evening," said Big Len, putting his head through the kitchen door into Ellen's parlour.

"Very well, Len."



[ALL HIS TREASURE GONE.]

In due time Mr. Ipsy made his appearance. He was a very nice little man indeed, with some striking and not altogether disagreeable personal peculiarities.

He was rather below the medium stature, but of perfectly elegant figure, with fine chest and shoulders, neatly turned waist and trim little limbs. His dress was always point device, his beaver glossy, his gloves fresh, and his boots shining.

He had a fine intellectual looking head, quite bald on the top, but encircled by tightly curling silky black hair around behind from temple to temple, with quite a fair broad forehead, small Roman nose, prominent chin, and keen eyes and eyebrows, so flexible, that one thought of nothing else when looking at him, and remembered nothing else after he was gone but his restless eyebrows.

His movements were all swift and smooth, his step tripping, his voice chirruping, and at the least emotion his eyebrows danced up and down as if galvanised.

When he entered Mrs. O'Donovan's parlour upon this evening, his dress was unusually finished. Spotless linen, white vest, glossy beaver and shining boots, and fresh gloves, a heavy, rich watch chain crossed his waistcoat, a diamond breast-pin sparkled on his bosom, and a blood-stone sea ring glowed on the little finger of his ungloved hand. His step, as he came tripping forward towards his hostess, was springier, and his tones as he greeted her cheerier than ever before.

Old Marian, peeping through the kitchen door, declared he looked "cisely like a groom, but that that should not hinder her from pitchin' of him neck an' heels right out 'o dat door ef he didn't 'ave hisself."

Mr. Ipsy never did otherwise than behave himself, and upon the present occasion if he was unusually spry and chirruping, and if his eyebrows danced a perfect fandango above his eyes, it was not that he entertained any bridegroomish ideas whatever, but simply because he had some excellent good news to tell his hostess. So when he had set his hat upon the table and seated himself in the chair she invited him to take, he turned to her in his glib way, and announced:

"We are to have neighbours here in March, madam."

"Ah! who are they?"

"Richard Pemberton has announced his intention

of retiring from public life at the close of the present session and settling permanently at his seat, Coverdale Hall."

"Oh, I know something of that. Mrs. Pemberton writes to me occasionally, and has intimated as much. But March is some time off yet, Mr. Ipsy?"

"Three months, madam, but that is not all," he added, with a polite wave of his little jewelled hand, "that is not all; the mere circumstance of Richard Pemberton settling himself finally amongst us is certainly, in itself, a highly important event, fraught with great good to the neighbourhood, yet it is not all. But Richard Pemberton, with that greatness of soul which characterises him, has purchased some land on the hill, and has sent down an architect and a staff of builders, to plan, lay out and erect a church. He farther intends to build a model school-house, and employ a teacher at his own expense, until the public here can be awakened to the duty of taking some measures for securing the benefit of education to all classes of children in the neighbourhood. Altogether it is an enormous expense for one man to take upon himself. But Richard Pemberton does not shrink from it. His wife's ample fortune enables him to do this with the greater ease, and Mrs. Pemberton, with her characteristic nobility, has placed it all at her husband's disposal."

"Augusta has the soul of an empress," exclaimed Ellen, energetically.

"Oh! rather such as an empress ought to have." "Yes, such as an empress ought to have. This surprises me very much, and yet it should not. It is unlike everybody else, but it is like Richard Pemberton and his wife, to act with magnificent munificence! When will all this be commenced?"

"Immediately, madam. The architect and his assistants are now here. Mr. Pemberton has written to me, authorising me to assist and advise them, whenever and wherever they may require it. The spot is already selected. The foundation will be laid in a day or so, and the works will be carried on to a completion with a rapidity compliant to Mr. Pemberton's own promptitude of resolution and execution, for his own imperative condition is that the church be built and well finished by Easter."

"At Easter. That is not over four months off, but I suppose if neither money nor labour is spared, it can be done."

"Certainly, madam. Richard Pemberton understands that where capital is at hand it is not good

economy to loiter over the completion of a work."

"And by Easter they will be, also, well settled at the Hall. I am very glad we shall have a church, and very glad they are coming to settle down with us."

The entrance of old Marian to set the tea table put a momentary stop to the conversation; a stop which, by the way, aroused the old woman's jealous fears for her favourite, and caused her to cast many threatening side-long glances at the dapper little gentleman visitor as she laid the cloth, and went to and fro between the cupboard and the table.

The children came in from their afternoon ramble, and when tea was ready the little family and their visitor all gathered around the table.

The projected new church and school-house on the hill formed the conversation.

The munificence of Richard Pemberton and his wife elicited the warmest expressions of admiration, and their proposed coming was anticipated with great impatience.

Very soon after tea Mr. Ipsy took his departure. "What are you thinking of, Sylvia," asked her brother that evening, as they sat round a little stand before the parlour fire, Ellen knitting, Sylvia sewing her patchwork, and Falconer touching up a new sketch. "What are you thinking of so gravely?"

"I was thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton. Oh, Falconer!"

"What?"

"I don't know, but it made my heart burn so when I heard of their goodness and greatness, and especially when I heard of their courage and devotion in the time of cholera. And, oh! besides—"

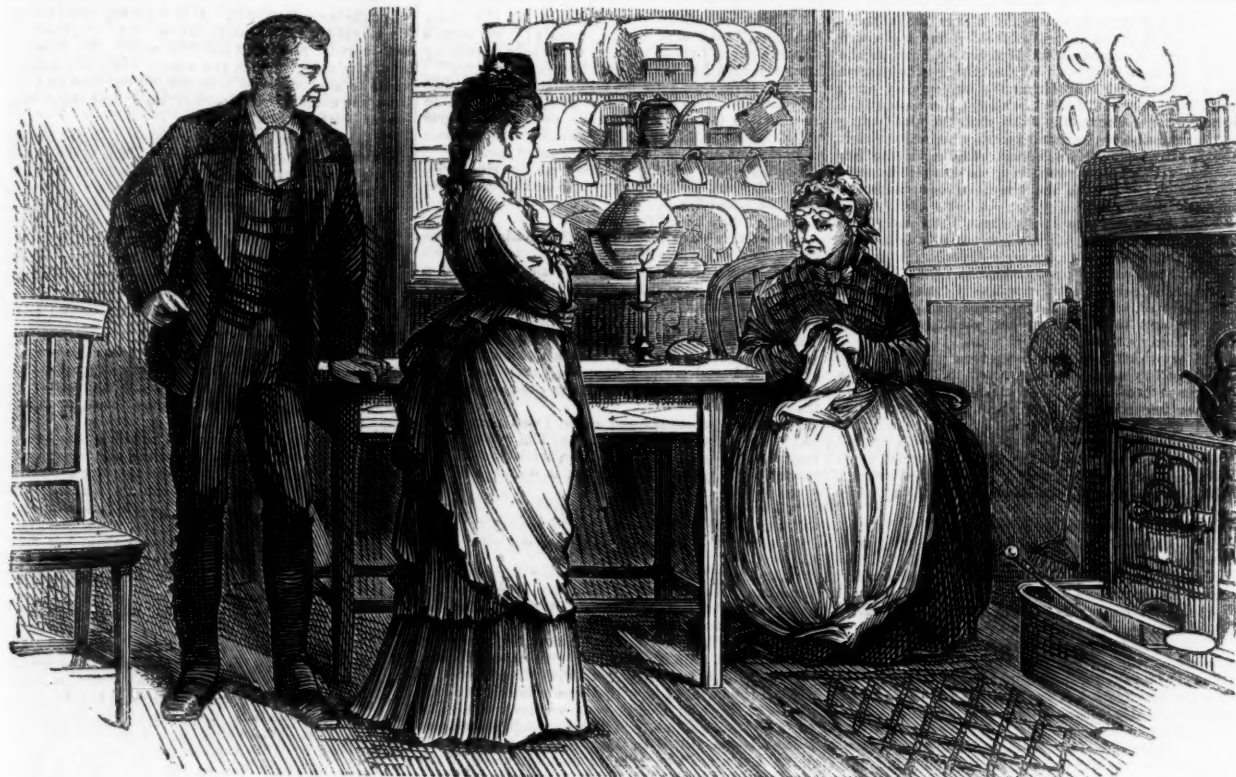
"Well, besides what?"

"Oh, this, then—that I feel it in my heart, that I would do as they did."

And Maud pressed both hands to her bosom, and her beautiful countenance shone seraphic with enthusiasm.

A few weeks after this Ellen received a letter from Mrs. Pemberton, informing her of the health and welfare of her family, and of Honoria's progress and beauty, and requesting her to ride over and open Coverdale Hall to the sun and air, and to have fires lighted to dry the dampness out before the arrival of Miss Letty and Mr. Douglas Pemberton, who were to come down in February to oversee the preparations for the reception of the family.

(To be Continued.)



[A DISAGREEABLE VISIT.]

THE GOLDEN BOWL.

By the Author of "Dan's Treasure," "Clitje Cranbourne," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

MILLY BRAY'S LOVERS.

A TALL, thin, wiry man, with crisp dark hair, keen gray eyes, features too finely cut for strength or power, too sensitive to set the world's buffets at naught, a man of about one or two and thirty, was Godfrey Slocombe.

Evidently a self-made, or rather self-educated man, he had wandered about the world just far enough to have lost his way in it, and to be rather conquered by difficulties and circumstances, than to attain a mastery over them.

With talent, energy, and perseverance enough to have succeeded in any one profession he had tried his hand, and wearied after the first steps of many, until some two years before the opening of this narrative, he was glad for a time to accept the post of secretary and librarian to Sir John Carew, of Clovelly Court.

For eighteen months he occupied this post with satisfaction to his employer and apparently to himself; so great an acquisition indeed was he to the neighbourhood, that he was invited out to most of the county houses as an equal—nay, often as an honoured guest, for he never made himself cheap to anyone, and it was a favour to get him to look over the contents of a library or give his opinion on the value of some half obliterated manuscript or rare old book.

One morning, however, to the surprise of everyone except Sir John Carew, he disappeared without saying good-bye to a single friend or acquaintance, and to all the questions on the subject which were addressed to the baronet, he only replied that Mr. Slocombe had been called away on some business of his own, and the probability of his return for any definite time was doubtful.

Many were the surmises as to the cause of this sudden break up in the relations between Sir John Carew and his secretary.

The proud old man had been observed to treat the younger one with unusual consideration and

affection, and therefore, those who wondered were assured that some base act of treachery and ingratitude on the part of the poorer man was the cause of the separation.

Thus it is, that in public opinion, the weakest usually goes to the wall.

When such a suspicion was hinted to Sir John, he repudiated it indignantly, saying there was no man living for whom he had a greater regard and respect, but for all he could say nobody believed him; if nothing disgraceful were attached to Godfrey's sudden departure, why had he not, at least, bidden adieu to some of his friends? So they reasoned and resented his conduct accordingly.

There was one inmate of Clovelly Court who thought more of the good looking secretary than was good either for her comfort or peace of mind, and this was Milly Bray, at one time maid to Carrie Carew, but since Mrs. Kempson's arrival at the Court, transferred to wait upon her.

Not that Mr. Slocombe had ever been more than ordinarily civil and polite to Milly, indeed so little impression had the girl's pretty face and trim figure made upon him, that if asked the question, he could scarcely have said whether she was dark or fair, good looking or plain.

He had noticed her as one of the servants at the Court, no more than that, and her coquettish glances, downcast eyes and vivid blushes, had all missed their mark, and been thrown away upon him.

Milly had great faith in her own charms, however, some also in her mother-wit, and she considered her case by no means hopeless, when a sudden collapse came to all her dreams, for the object of them with out a word or glance of adieu, departed.

At first she consoled herself with the assurance that he would soon return, then as time wore on and all hope of this died out, she tried to dissipate her love for one man by flirting with half a dozen others.

This was very unsatisfactory, however, especially as the half dozen were some of them of very indifferent quality, and bored her considerably, by taking as earnest what she simply meant as a distraction from one all-absorbing thought.

For Milly had made up her mind long ago to marry a gentleman or never to marry at all.

An unwise decision to arrive at, Milly, as you will yet find out to your cost.

Her love affairs having become somewhat complicated of late, Milly determined to be a little more prudent, and convince her numerous admirers that she did not care a straw about any of them; but the

difference between kindling a fire and stamping it out is very great, and the little woman found she had set herself a task which it was beyond her power to accomplish.

Some of the men were not unreasonable, and readily enough took the cold shoulder offered them, for there were girls enough, and to spare, and they preferred being smiled upon receiving nothing but indifference and disdain.

All were not so complaisant, however. Garston, the butler at the Court, a childless widower some two and forty years of age, had begun to entertain serious intentions and expected them to be listened to.

Bill Stacey, the stable-helper, who had been so frightened by the black ghost, had some wild and desperate, though not very lucid ideas, about doing something if she were not kinder and didn't listen to him when he tried—being somewhat short of words—to pour out his tale of love; but all this was mild and gentle, soft as summer breezes, compared with the tornado of passion which, like some infernal demon, had taken possession of one man's heart and brain.

Jacob Searle was a small farmer on the Clovelly estate, farming, under a lease, some two hundred acres, hard-working, respected, well-to-do, and living with his mother, who looked upon herself as having been the very model of a farmer's wife.

She was getting old and a trifle infirm now, and she said often enough, though she was scarcely sincere in it, that she wished Jacob could bring home a wife who could take all the responsibility of the dairy and poultry and housekeeping off her hands.

But though Mrs. Searle expressed a desire that Jacob should marry, she thought she ought to have a very decided voice in the selection of his wife, and Milly Bray was about the last young woman of her acquaintance to whom she would willingly resign her power.

In all confidence, without even a suspicion of danger, Mrs. Searle had confided her hopes to Milly, that Jacob would marry Miss Susan Green, who was known to have five thousand pounds of her own, and whose father would no doubt also dower her, she being his only daughter.

And Milly, looking as demure as any kitten, assented that it would be very nice, and on her way home to the Court that evening, recommended Jacob to carry out his mother's wishes.

For Milly had been down to Nethercliff, the Searles' farm, a good many times during the last two or three months.

She was a bright, agreeable, clever little body, very learned on the subject of fashion and taste, and could make dainty caps for Mrs. Searle, such as she could not have bought at Witherbridge—the nearest market-town—for four times the money they cost; and then Milly could tell her all the news about the people at the Court, Sir John and the two young ladies, and also of the grand people who came to visit them, all of which Mrs. Searle could retail to her gossips with an air of authority, as though she were on visiting terms with the people whose names she mentioned so freely.

First there was the hay harvest, then the wheat and corn were cut, and Milly must be at the harvest supper; also the orchards were laden with apples, some of them rosy as her own cheeks, others looking like balls of gold, and Milly was very fond of apples, and Jacob liked to take her to the orchards and point out the best to her, filling her pockets until they would hold no more.

All of which was very dangerous work for poor Jacob, and by no means conducive to Miss Green's chances of becoming Mrs. Searle, junior.

After her mistress was dressed for dinner, Milly could usually consider herself free for an hour or two, since it rarely happened that she was wanted again by her somewhat exacting mistress until bedtime, and it was soon after seven in the evening that the Searles had got into the habit of expecting her.

A week before the night of Sir John's death, Milly having dressed herself with becoming care, went over to Nethercliff to see Mrs. Searle.

She had not been to the farm for ten days or more, and Jacob had come to the Court with a message from his mother, asking Miss Bray to come down and see her.

If Milly had possessed a conscience, it would have pricked her when she looked at Jacob's love-stricken face; but on such a subject she had no compassion to spare for anyone but herself; was not she suffering from unrequited love, and why should not others bear the same burden and endure the same smart?

No, she thought as she tripped along, somewhat defiantly, on her way to the farm this evening.

The days were getting short, the mists were rising from the valleys, the leaves were falling from the trees, the warmth and brilliancy of summer had departed, and a chill came over the girl as she went on her way.

"I'm almost minded to go back," she mused, with a shiver. "Jacob tried to kiss me last time I was there, and I don't allow such a liberty. Talking I don't mind, or squeezing my hand, or perhaps even stealing an arm round my waist, but kissing is what I don't stand for no man, and what I won't from him, so I'll let him know." And having thus defined the limits of her favours Milly walked on, thinking she might as well get a disagreeable visit over.

On the side of a deep valley, Nethercliff Farmhouse could only be reached by descending a hill, and in the summer was one of the most lovely spots in Devonshire, with orchards running down to the meadows, through which wandered a branch of the river; to-night, however, the beauty was clouded over by the approaching darkness, and the tall poplars, that like so many sentinels stood facing the house, swayed and moaned in the wind as though they, too, dreaded the approaching winter.

The barking of dogs had led Milly's approach, and the door was opened before she could knock at it by the young farmer himself.

"We were feared you weren't coming," he said, with a tenderness in his voice that made her shrink, and holding her hand in his own, he led her into the presence of his mother, who, in something like grim dignity and silence, was sitting waiting to receive her.

"How be?" she asked, without rising, and extending her hand with but little cordiality in her tones and manner.

"Pretty well, thank you," replied Milly, with a pretty shrewd guess as to the phase matters had taken, and determined, if possible, to avoid a crisis, and not put herself in the way of such scenes again. "I've been coming to see you the whole week, but my lady's been that troublesome, you'd think she'd got something on her mind, or her cushions was stuffed with pins and needles. And then Miss Carrie has sent away Lisette, her French maid, and I've had to do little things for her too, and Mrs. Winstay began to grumble at my going out so often, and we're going to have a dinner party to-morrow, and I've been doing up a dress for my lady. La! how beautifully you're making them pillow cases, they're for Susan Green, Mrs. Jacob Searle that is to be, I suppose?" and she looked meaningly from Jacob to his mother as though she were the last person in the world to be personally interested in the young man's matrimonial intentions.

"Taint for nobody in special, but for the spare bed-room," said Mrs. Searle, crossly; "my work's never done, and them wenches think only of looking after the men folk; it wasn't like it in my day."

"No, things used to be very different from what they are now, I've heard. I wonder if the days were as short in October as they are now, it makes one most afraid to be out late; I shouldn't have come to night but Mr. Searle said you wanted me."

For Milly was getting irritated at her reception, and with very little further provocation was prepared to take offence.

"Me, I didn't send for you—I!"

But Jacob's voice in a tone half appeal, half command, said, "Mother!"

"Well?" turning sharply to him, then with a milder manner and with a faint attempt to be more cordial she added, "but we're always pleased to see you. There's some cake I made to-day, you must taste it, and have some cider or cowslip wine; I've been put out to day, you mustn't mind me, I'm getting old and cross, I suppose," this last with something like a sob in her voice as she rose to go to the pantry.

"Nonsense about old and cross, I shall expect to be quite a young woman when I'm your age," laughed the girl. "I'm coming with you to the pantry. I always like to see what is on the shelves, you know."

"Better hide here, Jacob wants you."

"Then Jacob may want," was the saucy retort as with a nod of defiance she followed his mother from the room.

"It wouldn't be such a bad thing for me," she mused as she went with the elder woman to the pantry, "he'd think there wasn't another woman like me under heaven, and she'd soon get to believe me the best of daughters-in-law, though I haven't got five thousand pounds of my own like Susan Green. But marry Jacob, go to church with him, live with him all the days of my life, and wake in the long nights to think of Godfrey, to wonder where he is, what he thinks of me, whether he would ever have loved me—no, I'll lie in my grave in the churchyard first. I shouldn't be true to Jacob in thought if I was in deed. Flirting and marrying are very different. No, Mrs. Searle needn't think I'm going to rob her of her son."

So thought Milly while her hostess, little dreaming it possible for any sane woman to refuse her son, was wondering if she dared invent anything to rouse the girl's pride and make her say "no," when otherwise it would be "yes," in answer to Jacob's suit.

Happily for her own peace of mind in the long weary years to come, she had not that thrust at her boy's happiness to reproach herself with, and, when worse than childless, she had the miserable satisfaction of feeling that at this critical period of her son's life, she put her own wishes aside in deference to his, and did not thwart him.

But I am anticipating. The cake and wine were soon disposed of, and then Milly said she must hasten home.

"I'll go as far as the gates with 'ee," said Jacob awkwardly, "the park be lonely."

"There's no need, I've been through it scores of times alone," replied the girl.

"I'm bound to go with you," was the sturdy retort, after which there was no further pretext, and the two went out into the dark night. Went forth as they should never return.

CHAPTER IX.

BALTIC MAKES A SPRING.

It was a full hour later; Mrs. Kempton's bell had rung twice for her maid, and the summons had been answered each time by another servant, who volunteered the information that Milly was out, when the girl ran into the kitchen, breathless, panting, her eyes distended with terror, her face, usually so rosy, white to the very lips, and every limb of her body trembling as though she were about to fall into convulsions.

The astonished servants gathered round her, one threw water on her face, another tried to remove her hat and jacket, and then it was noticed that both of these articles of clothing were torn as though in a struggle, that her gloves were covered with mud, and one of her hands was bleeding.

Numerous were the questions asked, and great the wonderment expressed; but before Milly was sufficiently recovered to answer any of them, Mrs. Winstay had been summoned to the scene, and carried the girl off as soon as she could walk to her own sitting room, where she made her sit down by the fire and thoroughly recover herself before she uttered a word.

For the housekeeper at the Court knew the value

of prudence and silence. A thoughtless word might be magnified into a story never to be forgotten or smothered. She ruled the little world with firmness and kindness; none of the women under her control came to her for advice or sympathy but they had the best she could give them, and their confidence was never betrayed or abused.

What Milly told the housekeeper it is not for me to divulge, at any rate, at present. The story given to the other servants was, that in coming through the park she had been frightened by a tramp who was begging; that in running away from him she fell down, got her hands covered with mud, and her dress torn with thorns, and had in her fright become so frantic, thinking she heard footsteps behind her, that she did not know how she ran, or where she went, until she fainted herself at the Court.

A plausible story enough, but not one found to be quite satisfactory to those who heard it.

It was useless cavilling at it, however, this was all Milly volunteered, and Mrs. Winstay suggested that as the girl's nerves were shaken she had better be allowed to forget it, and not questioned upon the subject.

The next day Milly remained in bed by the housekeeper's advice, a substitute for the day being found for her in a dainty young housemaid, much to Mrs. Kempton's disgust, since she could not understand why servants and "common people" should ever think of being ill.

But the second day the girl went about her work as usual, a trifle pale and nervous, perhaps, and less inclined for light flirtation, but otherwise her old port, clever and sassy self.

Anyone noticing her closely would have been struck with the fact that not only did she refrain from going to Nethercliff again, but she avoided going outside the doors of the Court at sunset, and was so nervous about going down to the village in broad daylight that she begged to be allowed to take Baltic, a huge Newfoundland dog, the special property of Miss Carrow, but which had been reared from puppyhood by Milly and the young lady with her.

Baltic was delighted at the preference given to himself. It was not every day that he got out with neither collar or chain to restrain his liberty, and as he was reputed to be somewhat of a savage, he would have been a bold tramp who would venture to attack anyone thus guarded.

So Baltic began to look for his walks, or runs rather, and to become also a trifle more civilised, sufficiently so at any rate as to cease to be a terror to everyone who met him, and Carrie Carrow, who could bestow but little care on the animal herself, said she considered it rather Milly's dog than her own, and that at any rate they were partners in his affections.

Thus the days passed on, until that one arrived which ended so fatally for Sir John Carrow.

On this morning, just before Sir Philip Walsingham called to ask Carrie to go for a ride, and when her sick headache was at its worst, she had ordered Milly to go to Coombe Ham, a small village or hamlet some three miles from the Court, and there inquire of Betsy Sprig whether the pillow lace she was making for the young widow was finished?

The order was received by the girl with anything but pleasure. To go to Coombe Ham she would have to pass Nethercliff or very close to it, unless indeed she went four or five miles out of her way.

But there was no disputing the order, she was to pay for the lace, and bring it back with her; if it was finished, and having received her instructions, she arranged the blinds, and the cushions of the couch, made up the fire, patted Fifi the lap dog, and was leaving the room to start on her errand, when Mrs. Kempton observed:

"You might take Fifi with you, the walk would do her good."

"Won't it be a long way for her, ma'am?" objected the girl.

"You can carry her, can't you?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the reluctant reply, for if Fifi went Baltic must remain at home, the two together were far more than any girl could manage.

Fifi however, like her mistress, was idle, and she earned Milly's lasting gratitude by positively and snappishly declining to accompany her.

"Let her alone, the noisy little brute," said Hilda Kempton, snappishly, with which Milly hurried off, fearing lest the spoils pet should relent.

As I have said, it was a lovely morning, the sun shone brightly, though the wind was fresh, almost keen, and the rich tints of late autumn still covered the fertile hills and dales.

Baltic too was in the maddest of spirits at the idea of a run; he gambled and leaped and barked with his deep toned far sounding voice in a manner loud enough to give the most timid courage, and as they walked along, the dog often far ahead of her, Milly

for the time forgot her nervous fears, forgot for a little while the very existence of Jacob Searle, and began to puzzle her head as to what she should do about Carston, the butler.

He had not asked her to be his wife in so many words, but he had taken her consent for granted, and had told her, as though it were a matter which concerned her as well as himself, what money he had in the bank, what his prospects, independent of his situation, were, all of which she had listened to, feeling she had given him every right to suppose it interested her.

She had no fear of the butler becoming violent like the farmer, but it was all very uncomfortable, and she saw no way out of the difficulties she had made for herself except going away for a time.

"If I could go to Australia or New Zealand, or some of those outlandish places now, and leave it all behind me, what a comfort it would be," and she sighed a sigh of regret that her fanciful flight could not be made a reality.

She had passed Nethercliff, and reached the river side, some half a mile higher up, where a rickety-looking foot-bridge crossed the swiftly rushing stream.

Accustomed as she was to the scenery around, Milly, this morning, could not help passing to notice its wonderful beauty.

The thickly-wooded banks of the river, and its swiftly-flowing current, rushing in such mad haste to the sea, from which it was not far distant, that the rocks and boulders which stood in the middle of its bed and rendered it unnavigable, were splashed over, surrounded with foam, and in some places formed an absolute dam, against which the impatient waters dashed and moaned in ungovernable, if impotent fury.

Very lovely it all looked. The river appeared blue and brown and green in patches, while the white foam looked, as Milly prosaically thought, like whipped cream on a pound cake.

Having crossed the foot-bridge, she looked round for Baltic. He had jumped into the water and was trying to swim across, but the current was too strong for him, and he had so far to yield as to struggle to make a landing some distance lower down.

Of course Milly could not help him. She had no anxiety as to the dog's safety, but she was vexed at the delay; but, knowing he would come to her side as soon as he could, she sat down on a stone near the foot of the bridge, watching the efforts of her canine friend.

So absorbed was she in this occupation that she did not hear a footstep, and it was only when a voice close to her side said, "Milly, will you forgive me?" that she turned round with affright to see the face of Jacob Searle within a few inches of her.

Oh, why did Baltic take to the water instead of walking reasonably across the bridge? Had he done so she would have had no fear, now she was terror-stricken.

Still, she must not show it. That would be the most fatal act of all. She must be brave and firm, if out of defiance, and then help might come. Besides, the sun was shining, and, in the broad daylight, she could not be frightened as when darkness covered the land.

Thus thinking, with an effort she nerved herself, and replied:

"I forgive you, as I forgive a man I never wish to see or hear about again, Jacob Searle. If you think that's forgiveness, you're welcome to it."

"I'm grateful for that, Milly; but can't you say nothing kinder?"

"Kinder!" repeated the girl, forgetting prudence in indignation. "Can the lamb be kind to the wolf as tears and murders it, do you think? Kind? It's no thanks to your kindness that I'm alive, and as I am now!"

"You're wrong, Milly, I was wild, I own, and I lost myself; but I'd have done honestly by you, and you sent me mad when you talked of loving another chap better than me. 'Twould have sent you mad, too, lass, if you'd heard such a thing of a man you'd meant to marry. And you know you'd no mercy on me, Milly. 'Twasn't till you said you'd only been making game of me, as the devil tempted me and I laid a hand on you. Say you'll forget it all and come and be mistress of Nethercliff. Do'ee now."

"It's kind of you, Jacob, I know, and if I was like other girls I'd say 'yes' like a shot, but I'm not. I couldn't marry a man as I didn't love with all my heart and soul, as I didn't feel I couldn't live without. You men don't understand a woman, but it's true. If I can't marry the man I love, I'd rather lie at the bottom of that river than marry a man I don't love, and—and—Jacob, I'm feared I don't love you."

"Then, lass, at the bottom of that river thou shalt lie, or thou shalt be my wife."

For a second Milly looked at him with widely distended eyes of wonder and astonishment, not quite unmingled with one of terror, then she lifted a small silver whistle she held in her hand to her lips and blew a long shrill note.

Jacob Searle sprang forward, snatched and wrenched it from her, but the sound had gone forth, Baltic had but a few seconds before landed, and before Jacob Searle could carry his implied threat into execution, the dog appeared, to take part in the scene.

"Touch me, and you'll find you're no more a match for him than I was for you the other night," said Milly, with defiance and scorn in her face. "Now go," she added, as she held the dog by his long hair, "or I'll set him on you."

"I can settle him," was the brutal retort, "and you too, I'm not afraid," and he produced a revolver from his pocket, and aimed it at Baltic. "Now," he went on, "what is it to be; be quick and make your mind up, it's your last chance; my wife or the river?"

"I am to die, or to marry you?" asked the girl, fixing her eyes upon him and compelling his gaze in return.

"That's just it," was the dogged response.

"Then I'll die," she said, calmly, her eyes still holding his in a fixed, unwavering glance.

But her hands relaxed their hold on Baltic. He had been making efforts to spring on the stranger, who, by instinct, he knew was threatening them, and now with the implied permission of his present mistress, with one bound sprang at Jacob Searle's throat and threw him on the ground, standing over and holding him down, while the report of firearms was heard, and the revolver, having had the trigger pulled, fell from the farmer's hands, and for the moment, beyond his reach.

"What is the matter? what is this?" asked a strange voice, by their side: strange, and yet familiar to one, for Milly looked up, with a start, to see Godfrey Slocombe.

"Oh, is it you? Then you have come at last?" And she flew towards him and threw her arms round his neck. Nay, she would have kissed him but for the look of dismay, if not disgust, that came over his features. Then she remembered herself, and withdrawing her arms, with a blush, she said: "I beg your pardon, I have been so frightened and I was so glad to see you."

And the pretty eyelids drooped, and the flush deepened on her cheek; certainly a man might be kissed by a far less pretty girl than Milly Bray any day in the week without wincing.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Godfrey, looking at the prostrate farmer; "Haden't you better call your dog away?"

"Yes, the man frightened me. Come here, Baltic; leave him alone! Do you hear me?" and the dog, very reluctantly, relaxed his hold upon Jacob, who slowly pulled himself together and stood upon his feet.

"So, that's the man I'm thrown over for, is it?" he asked, sternly.

But Milly made no reply. Baltic had recognised an old friend in the corner, and together the three walked on, the disconcerted lover being left ignominiously behind.

"Dang me if they shan't both lie in the same grave before he shall have her," murmured Jacob, with an oath, as he picked up his revolver and made his way home to his perplexed and frightened mother.

Meanwhile Milly and Godfrey Slocombe were, for the first time in their lives, taking a walk together.

(To be Continued.)

THE.—There is no doubt that tea-drinking has an injurious effect on the complexion. Take human skin and let it soak for a time in strong tea, and it will become leather. Now, when we remember that the liquids which enter the stomach are rapidly absorbed by the veins and absorbents of the stomach and enter into the circulation, and are thrown out of the system by the skin, respiration and kidneys, it is probable that a drink so common as tea and so abundantly used, will have some effect. Can it be possible that tannin, introduced with so much liquid producing perspiration, will have no effect upon the skin? Look at the tea-drinkers of Russia, the Chinese and the old women of America, who have so long continued the habit of drinking strong tea. Are they not dark-coloured and leather-skinned? When young they were fair complexioned.

THE DIAMOND BRACELET.

CHAPTER LVIII.

DURING Sinda's stay in Kensington, Fella had bought for her young mistress a portmanteau, and stocked it with a change of clothing of the most exquisite fineness and delicacy of finish. When the girl had remarked upon her extravagance, and expostulated with her for her profuse expenditure, the Hindoo woman had declared that she had expended the money which Sinda had given her on their arrival in England for her own use, and that it was her pleasure to use it for her mistress. And Sinda, touched by her unselfish love, had received the gift and thanked the giver.

This little outfit was now brought into requisition. The portmanteau was brought up and placed in Sinda's dressing-room.

The girl retired to her bath-room, and when she emerged refreshed, Fella had ready her second gown, a handsome black silk, fashionably made. In a little while, Sinda's pale gold hair was becomingly arranged, and she was fully dressed in her best gown, and had shaken out its puffs and folds and plaitings to her satisfaction, and was ready to descend.

"You see, missy, it was well that I bought the dress, extravagant as you thought me," said Fella, in a tone of satisfaction. "When you left all your fine clothes at Haigh Lodge, I knew that you must have more—"

"I don't quite see how you could make twenty pounds, which is all I gave you, go so far, Fella," said Sinda, as the other paused to adjust a frill. "If I only had my jewels I might hope to reward and repay you; but they are all gone, and I have only the few pounds Mrs. Biggs left me. I wonder which of them, Mrs. Biggs or her son, has my jewels? They both pretended ignorance so completely that I could almost have believed them, but that I knew one of them must have them."

Before the Hindoo could reply the door opened abruptly, and Maya swept into the room.

She paused near the threshold and surveyed Sinda with a lip curling with scorn and with a supercilious expression that stung Sinda's proud soul to the quick.

Maya was dressed in pale blue velvet, trimmed with fine plaitings of pale blue silk. Her fair hair was arranged in a group of curls at the back of her head. Prosperity had spoiled her. Her soft features were an expression of evil discontent, of overweening vanity, of abounding self-love. She had grown tyrannical—an Eastern despot in an English country-house. She had never made friends in India, and not a serving-woman in the palace, not even her own special attendant, had been willing to accompany her to England. The same hateful spirit that had made her disliked there, made her detested here. She insulted the lady-housekeeper a dozen times a day; she was a merciless task-mistress to the servants; and since the earl's illness she had delighted to exercise and exhibit her authority in every way until the old household retainers would have quitted the castle in a body but for the sake of Lord Tregarou, and the hope that he would recover.

"So you have come, Sinda?" she exclaimed. "I have just been told of your arrival."

Something in her tones and manner brought a quick, hot flush to Sinda's cheeks. She moved forward, however, and held out her hand. Maya refused to take it.

"We are not equals, you know, Sinda," she remarked. "Caste rules here as well as in India. And really, you know, the Biggs family are what might be called pariahs—"

Sinda's hand dropped to her side.

"I wonder that you came here at all," continued Maya, giving full expression to her secret dissatisfaction. "Of course, I know that Armand Elliot brought you here, and a great liberty, too, I consider it, although he probably counts upon coming into possession directly."

"Lord Tregarou wrote me a letter inviting me to return to Belle Isle as his adopted daughter and as your sister, Maya," said Sinda, with something of the haughtiness of the Begum. "I have but accepted his invitation—"

"But that is all changed now. He is ill—very ill. He will die. And I came in expressly to tell you that I want to hear nothing about that proposition of his. He can't adopt you now, and I refuse to accept you as a sister. You can stay now that you are here, but until you are married to Mr. Elliot you will be so good as to keep your own place, which you must recognise as an inferior one. Your mother was here

one evening last week," continued Maya. "She is almost dazed by your loss. She said that you had run away from her. I own I was amazed. Father Henry's favourite pupil, his pet Begum, his devoted little follower," sneered Maya, "has turned out to be very human indeed! You found your mother disagreeable, and so you deserted her?"

"She was very cruel to me, Maya. She tried to force me to marry a friend of her son—a bad man—and I refused. She locked me up and I escaped and ran away. I would have been a good daughter to her, but she has never liked me. She has never shown any maternal affection for me—and I do not believe that she is my mother!" affirmed Sinda, her face pale, her eyes glowing.

Maya's face lost something of its pink bloom.

"What nonsense!" she exclaimed. "Because you don't like her, you fancy that she isn't your mother! How absurd! However, I am willing to do what I can to bring about a reconciliation between you and your mother. If you marry Mr. Elliot, you will be mistress here, and Mrs. Biggs will live with you. I shall go to Longmead, a lovely estate that papa has given me in his will, and I shall queen it there while you manage here with the Biggesses. But enough of this. It is dinner time. Let us go down together for the sake of appearances."

Sinda bowed gravely, and Maya led the way down to the dining-room.

Maya had not heard of Sinda's arrival until after she had been dressed for dinner. All her long years of envy and hatred were fresh in her mind. She regarded Sinda as a dangerous rival, and was anxious to get her out of the house. Upon the impulse of the moment she had hurried to Sinda and expressed a portion of the venom that filled her soul.

As reflection ensued, she was sorry for her haste. She was calculating, shrewd, and mercenary. She began to think that Sinda as Countess of Tregaron would take precedence of her, whatever might be thought of Sinda's origin, and it occurred to her that it would be wise to make a friend of the future Lady of Tregaron.

Acting upon this wise after-thought, she paused upon a wide landing of the great stair, and held out her hand, and in her old, soft, purring fashion made a little apology for her recent brusqueness, alleging, as reasons for it, her anxiety about the earl, her desire to conform to English customs, and adding that she was greatly troubled, and not at all herself of late.

Sinda received the apology gravely, and with a haughty sweetness that quite failed to reassure Maya. But Sinda did not now see the hand extended to her, and Maya bit her lips in chagrin and tossed back her head, moving on toward the drawing-room.

Armand Elliot and Wolsey Bathurst were both waiting. They came forward to meet the young ladies, and Sinda greeted Bathurst with a grave and polite courtesy. He responded to it with warmth. Dinner was announced, and, soon after the meal of ceremony, Elliot took Sinda up to Lord Tregaron's room.

"You see?" said Maya, jealously, when she was left alone with Bathurst. "The earl wants her to come and sit with him, but he does not want me!"

"It is nature's instinct," said Bathurst, gloomily. "She is his own child, and although he does not know it, yet the tie of kindred blood asserts itself."

"Nonsense. It's for the old, old reason—everybody always liked Sinda better than me!" cried the girl bitterly.

"They may have had a reason for the preference," observed Bathurst. "You are a cat, a human cat. Formerly, you purred continually. Of late, you scratch every one, even me. You snarl and fret, until I wonder I ever admired you. Sinda has a sunny disposition."

"Sinda again! Do let her name rest. What time is it? Half past nine o'clock! It's quite dark, is it not? And we are to be at the second gate of the park at ten!"

Maya went to the window and looked out. The night was dusky, with a dampness that foretold speedy rain.

The girl's face had a strangely desperate look upon it, as she turned from the window and walked towards Bathurst.

"Shall you be there?" she whispered. "Are we to carry out our plan and silence for ever the voice that would betray us?"

"Yes. For if we should buy the woman's silence she might tell the whole story in her next drunken fit. We are not safe while she lives. She is known to be drunken and heedless—let her die as by accident, and the blame will be laid at her own door. I

am resolved to put it out of her power to betray the horrible truth. Let Elliot always believe that his wife is a Biggs, and let me have the credit of marrying Lord Tregaron's daughter."

"I will go up and change my dress. I will meet you on the east bridge," said Maya. "I shall not be long."

She hurried up to her own room, tossed aside her dinner-robe, and put on a short walking costume. Then flinging around her a long, circular waterproof cloak, she hurried along the corridor towards a private staircase.

On the way she passed the earl's door. Stopping, she listened at the keyhole. Her face darkened, her forehead contracted in a hideous scowl, and her eyes snapped savagely as she heard Lord Tregaron address Sinda with a tenderness he had never shown towards her. The earl was advising Sinda to marry Elliot immediately, and Maya could hear the sweet, low voice of the ex-Begum in remonstrance, uttering doubts and objections which Lord Tregaron took pains to refute and overcome in the most fatherly manner.

"How much he loves her!" thought Maya, bitterly. "I'll cut short their loving intercourse this very night. After Wolsey and I dispose of that woman—after all have gone to bed—I'll pay him a visit and add a dose to his carafe that will end his paralysis and him together! Yes, I'll give him both the remaining potions in one, and that this very night."

She arose from her stooping position and flitted on like a shadow to keep her tryst with Mrs. Biggs—that tryst which she had determined, with all the evil in her nature, should be a final one!

CHAPTER LIX.

Mrs. Biggs was at the appointed rendezvous in good time.

A fly brought her from Lostwithiel to the Tregaron inn, where she alighted, continuing her journey on foot.

The night was soft and dusky, with the damp of coming rain in the air. The woman was half inebriated. Her mood was savage, as it was wont to be when she was under the influence of too much beer or spirits.

She wore a long, purple, satin dress that dragged after her in the dusty roadways, and her bonnet hung low at the back of her head.

Her hair was frowsy, and her red, coarse and bloated face wore an expression of recklessness and bravado that sufficiently indicated her present disposition.

She arrived at the second gate of Tregaron Park and tried to open it.

It was locked. She clutched the long, iron, upright bars, endeavouring to shake them, and was so occupied when Maya, wrapped in her long, dark cloak, came fluttering down the park paths and approached the rendezvous.

The girl unlocked and opened the gate, and the woman staggered into the shadows of the park.

Maya looked out with a peering glance up and down the road.

"You came alone, I see," she exclaimed, in a tone expressive of satisfaction. "Come further into the park, so that no passer-by can hear us."

She led the way to a little open glade, and Mrs. Biggs sat down heavily upon a rustic seat.

"I've heard strange news to-day," said the woman. "Strange news, Rhody! They say over at Lostwithiel that my lud is dying of paralysis. Is that true?"

"It is true!"

"I declare! And it a'n't a week since he talked to me like a pirate!" observed Mrs. Biggs. "And now he's a dyin'. That there is retribution, Rhody, if ever there was any! If he dies, you'll still be Liddy Katharine, won't you?"

"Of course," assented Maya, listening for some sound of Bathurst, whom she knew to be hidden close at hand among the trees.

"And no one can ever disturb you in your title, Rhody, if he's dead?"

"No one!"

"And he leaves you a fortune?"

"Yes," said Maya. "He leaves by will to his dear daughter Lady Katharine Elliot, a great estate, named Longmead; all his own private fortune which he inherited from his father, and some mines in Cornwall and Wales—a very great fortune altogether."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Biggs; "to his dear daughter, the Lady Katharine Elliot, eh? Well, if you're liberal, Rhody, you can have it all. Since I heard that my lud was dyin', I've been 'lotlin' to live with you, as companion, or suthin'—"

"You! As my companion?" Maya could not conceal her disgust.

"Well—yes. Rich leddies do have companions. I lived as under housemaid once to a rich leddy as kept a companion," said Mrs. Biggs, sullenly. "And you'll have to pay me a handsome sum, Rhody, a thousand a year. That was understood before. Did you bring me some money to-night?"

"Yes," said Maya; "but we will speak of that later. I want to tell you that you will never be my companion—never. I am willing to give you a last chance. Leave me alone. Swear to leave England—"

"I won't!" cried Mrs. Biggs, doggedly. "You won't live in splendour with me a wanderin' in foreign lands, not by no means. I'll share yer lot, Rhody. Your husband shall be my son, next to Simon, in my heart, and I'll 'company you into society—"

"You want to ruin me?"

"No, I'll keep the secret. I'll swear as Cinder is my child, but I'll live with you, Rhody, and Simon, he'll come—"

"But you will bring exposure upon me by that very course."

"If people suspect, they can't prove nothin', Rhody."

The girl groaned.

"I would have given her a chance of escape," she thought, "but she rejects it. Her blood be on her own head."

The old woman, too tipsy to know that she was exciting her daughter to a desperate frenzy, was silent for some minutes. Then she exclaimed:

"Heard from Cinder yet, Rhody?"

"Yes," said Maya, recklessly, "she arrived at the castle to-night."

The old woman sprang to her feet in quick excitement.

"She's here?" she exclaimed. "Along of Mr. Elliot?"

"Yes."

"Married?"

"No. But she will be married to him to-morrow by special license in the Tregaron church."

"She will, eh? Without my consent? We'll see about that!" cried the old woman, in a fury. "Give me that money, Rhody, as you've got for me, and I'll go up to the castle and claim Cinder as my datter this very minute. I'll see if I'm to be trampled on in this style. Goin' to be married? Hum! Give me the money, Rhody, and lead the way."

She held out her hand for the expected gold, but Maya had no money for her.

"If you go to the castle," she exclaimed, "you must go by the road, else you will bring suspicion upon me. If you go through the park, it will be known that some one let you in, and I shall be suspected as that one. Come out to the gate and I will then give you the money and you can go where you will!"

The old woman assented. She could not see the white and desperate face of the girl; she could not see the murderous light that gleamed in the pale blue eyes; nor did she suspect the wicked purpose that at that moment filled Maya's entire being.

They returned to the gate. Bathurst crept after them. He carried in his hand a bludgeon, which he had procured with some difficulty since nightfall. The elegant young man of society seemed transformed into a common, low ruffian.

He, too, was desperate, with nerves strung to a frightful purpose. Everything that he had schemed for, Maya's fortune, position, and connections were at stake. He and Maya were alike at the mercy of a drunken old woman. Upon the one hand were worldly honours, wealth, social recognition, ease, and luxury.

Upon the other were social vagabondism, poverty—for his reward which he had received from Lord Tregaron for his efforts in the search for the earl's daughter, would not maintain two persons—the jeers of people who would know how and why he had married—everything he held in special abhorrence!

If Mrs. Biggs were dead, then he could live in comfort. He was resolved that she should die, and no pang of conscience, no compunction, no suspicion of faltering, entered his mind.

Maya opened the gate and peered out as before, with a caution that befitted her wicked purpose. The country road, covered with the soft, damp dust, gave no sound of footfalls, and no one was to be seen upon it.

"Give me the money, Rhody," said Mrs. Biggs.

"Wait a moment. Are you still determined to go to the castle?"

"I am. I'm goin' there immediate."

"I'll walk a little way with you," said Maya.

They walked side by side for a little distance. Then the girl cried suddenly:

"I've gone far enough. I'll go back now. I have a last word to say to you."

"Sounds as though I heard some one comin'," said Mrs. Biggs, suspiciously, looking behind her. "Didn't you hear steps a creepin' like, Rhody?"

"It is fancy," exclaimed Maya, hurriedly. "I'll give you a last chance. Will you swear to me to leave England, to give up your scheme of living near or with me?"

"No, I won't. If you're ashamed of me, I'll blow the whole thing, blamed if I don't!" interrupted Mrs. Biggs, recklessly. "You've been that scornful to me that I'd like to take you down a peg, that I would. And Cinder has been that meek and gentle that, if she'd settle a annuity upon me, I don't know but I'd out with the whole truth. It depends on how much I'd make either way. I can tell when I see Mr. Elliot, which is a perfect gentleman and quite respectful, being Cinder's mother as is supposed, and, if I chooses, why, then, Rhody, you'll be took down, that's all!"

The girl set her lips in a hard, tense line.

"You are intoxicated, and therefore dangerous," she said, quietly. "You will always be dangerous while you drink, and you'll drink while you live!"

"That's so, I s'pose," laughed the old woman, coarsely. "Now, give me the money, Rhody, and I'll see what I'll do!"

"You have sealed your own fate, you miserable creature!" cried Maya. "Whatever happens, you are the one to blame!"

The girl had heard Bathurst's steps close behind her, yet in the shadow of the park palings. She beat an abrupt retreat towards the open gate. The old woman turned about, peering before her in a stupid amazement.

She had barely time to make out Bathurst's advancing figure when he sprang upon her with up-lifted bludgeon, and brought the weapon crashing down upon her head.

There was a faint outcry, a rain of heavy blows, a sound of crashing skull, and the drunken old woman lay prostrate in the dusty road—a woman no longer, but a ghastly thing dedabbled with blood and without life or sense—dead!

Wolsey Bathurst flung down his bludgeon, bedaubed with blood and with coarse, long hairs clinging to it, which he could not see in the darkness, and returned to the girl, sick and overcome with horror.

"She's dead!" he whispered, halting in the shadow of the park.

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. No human being could live under the blows I gave her. I heard her skull crash in. Oh, it was horrible—horrible."

He shivered as with an ague fit.

Maya's lip curled contemptuously as she fastened the gate, but her face was white, and she trembled also.

"She brought it on herself," she muttered. "She'll never betray us now."

"Never. Yet a dead body is sometimes a more terrible witness than a living person," said Bathurst. "We must take care that hers cannot testify against us."

He sat down, pallid and scared, and with a great terror upon him.

"We must return to the castle," said Maya, impatiently, more self-possessed than he. "If we are missed, we may be connected with this night's work. I came out unseen, I can return in the same way. I will go to my room and summon my maid and tell her that I am just come up from the drawing-room. And you, Wolsey?"

"I am myself again. I will return to the drawing-room, and show myself to the butler and the other servants. Come!"

They hurried back through the park, across the bridge, to the castle gardens. Maya made her way unseen into the dwelling and up to her own rooms.

Her maid was below, gossiping in the servants' hall, and there was no one to remark her dress, her wild haste, or her excessive pallor.

She removed her outer garments and put on again her dinner robe of pale blue velvet, her ornaments of pale pink coral, re-arranged her curls, and rang her bell for her maid.

The girl appeared, and Maya languidly told her, with a yawn, that she had just come up from the drawing-room.

"I shall retire early," she said, "and you may remain here. I will go in and tell papa good-night and return immediately."

She swept out of the hall, not noticing the stare of amazement in the girl's eyes.

"Why, mademoiselle is strange to-night," thought the maid. "Very strange! Her eyes are very odd; her face is dead white. But the strangest thing of all is that James told me one half an hour ago that

my young lady had gone to her room, and I came up and found that dinner dress in her wardrobe, and she not here. She couldn't have been in my lord's room, for she's going there now. And she has on that dress again. There's some mystery going on. What can it be?"

Unconscious that her movements had excited comment, or that the eyes she sought to blind were so keen and watchful, Maya proceeded to Lord Tregaron's chamber. She tapped lightly upon the door, opened it, and entered.

At first sight it seemed as if no one was in the room. The candle-lights had been extinguished. The soft firelight shed a warm glow, radiating even to the far corners.

Maya advanced to the bedside. Lord Tregaron lay upon his pillow, pale and thin, with closed eyes and composed visage, seeming profoundly asleep.

The girl contemplated him for some moments. She had seen that no one else was in the room, his lordship's valet having gone below upon some errand, and Sinda and Elliot having retired to their separate private apartments.

No compunction stirred Maya's heart now any more than at an earlier hour of that same evening. Yet she could not help noting the grandeur and nobleness of this haughty, clear-cut face. She could not help observing the goodness expressed in every feature.

Here was a noble life, useful to others, which she meant to destroy as ruthlessly as that other life, so wretched and wicked, had been destroyed that night!

"Papa!" she said, softly.

The earl did not stir.

"Papa!" she repeated more loudly.

He did not speak or move.

"He is asleep!" she said to herself. "They have given him his sleeping powder. It is past the time for it!"

The last assertion was true, but the former was not. Lord Tregaron had not yet taken his sleeping powder, and he was not yet asleep. Sinda had left him at ten o'clock; Elliot had just departed; and the earl had not touched his bell to summon back his valet whom he had sent from him at the entrance of his visitors.

He was wearied with excitement, oppressed with anxieties, and greatly troubled. He had been lying in a trance-like state when Maya's knock sounded on the door. He had not moved at her entrance, but he knew that she was there. He heard her words, but he was in no humour to speak to her, and awaited her departure.

But Maya did not immediately go.

She touched him, convinced herself that he was asleep, and then stealthily approached the small table upon which the bottles of medicine were gathered.

"His strengthening draught!" she muttered. "He will take that next!"

The earl opened his eyes and regarded her with singular intentness. She did not notice him, being absorbed in her murderous deed.

She withdrew from her bosom the phial which she had before employed, and emptied its deadly contents into the strengthening draught.

Then, as she restored the empty phial to its former hiding-place, she retreated from the table with a sinister glow upon her fair face, an evil triumph in her pale blue eyes.

The earl counterfeited sleep again, a cold horror seizing upon him.

(To Be Continued.)

CEYLON TEA.

PATERFAMILIAS with a large family of grown-up, well educated sons, and who knows not how or where on earth he can provide for them, might do well to consult the Journal of the Society of Arts for January 5, under the head, "Ceylon Tea." According to Dr. Thwaites in his reports for 1865, the climate of Ceylon seems admirably adapted for the successful cultivation of tea, the plant growing well from the elevation of Peradeniya (1,600ft.), to that of Hakgalle (5,000ft.). In 1869 young plants of the Assam hybrid variety, raised from seed, were growing vigorously at Hakgalle, and that they succeeded far better than at Peradeniya.

The China tea is stated to be the only one which grows well at the lower elevation. Dr. Thwaites again says, "The tea-plant thrives so luxuriously upon our hills at an elevation slightly above that suited for coffee cultivation, that it is difficult not to believe that our slopes will before very long be covered with thriving tea-plantations."

In 1875 tea cultivation is reported as progressing most rapidly in the island, and the last report for

the year ending March last, says, "It is now a well-established fact that commercial tea, of a very superior quality indeed, can be produced in Ceylon." I have necessarily abridged much of the document contained in the "Society of Arts Journal," which is well worthy of perusal, and can be purchased for sixpence. During my visit to Ceylon in September and October, 1849, I never heard that there were any tea-plants in the island, except perhaps a few in the Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, although none ever were pointed out to me there. I saw several of the best coffee estates in full cultivation, but the growth of tea was unknown.

The late Sir James Emerson Tennent, who visited the beautiful coffee estate of Mr. Worms at Pussilava in 1846, wrote, "On this fine estate an attempt has been made to grow tea. The plants thrive surprisingly, and when I saw them they were covered with bloom, but the experiment was defeated by the impossibility of finding skilled labour to dry and manipulate the leaves. Should it ever be thought expedient to cultivate tea in Ceylon, the adaptation of the soil and climate has thus been established, and it only remains to introduce artisans from China to conduct the subsequent process." I was visiting a gentleman, the proprietor of a large coffee estate just above the Worms one at Pussilava, in 1849—certainly no tea-plants there existed.

Whether Chinese labour has been on a large scale imported into Ceylon, I know not, but I suppose any number of coolies can now be procured from the Eastern Coast of Madras during the existence of the famine which appears to pervade that Presidency. Were I young, and in possession of my former acute sight, I would, with a little capital, desire nothing better than to cultivate tea in Ceylon. With that gloriously beautiful range of hills, Newera Ellia, brought, I suppose, now within easy access, the dyspeptic or hypochondriac need desire no better climate.

SOME of our railway companies have it in contemplation to take a leaf out of the book of the telegraph offices, and employ respectable females as clerks at stations. This has long been done on the Continent with success. The work is such that delicate females can perform it just as well as men. At several of the metropolitan railway stations female clerks are already employed, and the practice is found to answer. It is the extension of the system which is contemplated, and it is even said that the Great Western, one of the most backward companies to adopt improvements, are bastarding themselves in the matter.

HIS EVIL GENIUS.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

YES, it was Gorles himself who lay wriggling on the stones outside the post-office in a most dilapidated condition. The collar of his coat seemed to have changed places with the tails, which were twisted somehow round his neck, his shirt front and handkerchief were torn to ribbons, and large tufts of his ruffled hair appeared to have been tugged out by the roots; even his bitterest enemy could hardly have wished to see him under more grievous circumstances.

There were not above half-a-dozen witnesses to this extraordinary scene besides myself; but amongst them a middle-aged gentleman of transatlantic origin, as I guessed by his twang and very forcible mode of expressing himself, who appeared diverted beyond all measure, and informed me that there had for some time been a daily contest between that phosphorical little Britisher and the functionary for some time past, from the former's always insisting upon being allowed to look over the whole of the letters addressed to the Poste restante himself; but that he calculated that upon this particular morning matters had reached a climax; and, bless his old grandmother! (who for the matter of that had been dead and buried these ten years in Kentucky, but had lived to ninety, and was tough as an old boot), but dang his vitals! if in all that time he had ever seen anything to whip that, which he would not have missed, he guessed, for whole boots full of dollars.

Thus was the delighted Yankee giving vent to his feelings when Gorles, gathering himself up from off the pile of letters which he had brought out with him in his ignominious descent, turned with a malicious snarl upon him, apostrophising him as a giggling hyena, and asking what the deuce he meant by insulting him.

Just as he was thus picking himself up, my eye suddenly caught the direction of one of the letters

in the heap lying uppermost on the ground, addressed to my mother, and almost close by it another to myself. I was in the very act of stooping for them, when my arm was suddenly seized by the official, who had banged to his little port-hole and rushed round to the front to secure his scattered letters.

In an instant he had gathered them all up from under my very nose, and giving Gorles's hat which still lay temptingly within reach an extra scratch with his heel, was back again round in his office before I had recovered my surprise.

It was in vain that the American and I applied for our letters; declaring that we were both accomplices of that Diaboline Inglesse, as he called him, the enraged official utterly declined even to listen to our demands, and when we persisted only threatened to send for the police.

Naturally we stormed and protested, and then tried persuasion; but all means were equally without effect.

We tried the Jodge of going away for a while and then coming back in half an hour, to knock again respectfully as if entirely fresh and unimplicated strangers. It was not the least use. He knew us at once, and slammed the little door against our noses, which he opened again in an instant, only, however, to derisively inform us that it had just struck twelve o'clock, and happening to be a mezza festa, or half-holiday, the post office was now closed according to custom, and so would continue to be, not only over the next day Sunday, but through the Monday also, being a festa or Saint's day, and therefore that our earliest possible chance, if even then, upon due consideration he might think fit to let us have our letters would not certainly be till the next morning after; and so saying he barred up the window, came out and locked the door, and walked off deliberately with the key in his pocket.

My newly made Yankee friend was perfectly rampant in his wrath; again and again in loud terms did he sang not only many of his ancestral and collateral relatives, quick and dead likewise, as far as I could judge by some of his allusions to them, but himself especially, for having been so thoughtless and unlucky as to have come out that morning without either his revolver or his blessed bowie knife, by a judicious use of either of which he calculated the official might have been induced to listen to reason.

But go, he would, slick up to the Pitti Palace and just ask to see the Grand Duke himself on the subject; and by Hooky, he guessed he would just let that old boss know what sort of aarnation son of a scoundrel he had got in his post office.

It was a most annoying thing, certainly, thus to know that there really was a letter for my mother anxiously waiting as she was for me; and yet be thus prevented from getting possession of it; and through the fault and folly of another person too, and that other person was, of course, always the same, the same not luck or chance, as I was going to say, but the same inevitable fate haunting me over again and again.

Now that Gorles was mixed up in the matter again, simple as it might be, I felt certain that something dreadful was going to happen to me. For I have not told you all yet of this letter adventure.

I had tried to keep quite clear of, and while I was arguing with the postman had pretended not even to notice Gorles as he picked himself up and shrunk off, exchanging anything but compliments with the American, who certainly returned him as good as he gave, till he vanished round the corner.

What, then, was my astonishment when I at last returned home, unable to get the letter, as I have described, and proportionally riled and disappointed, to find Gorles on his tiptoe, in the act of trying to reach the bell-pull at the door of our lodgings.

"Oh," said he, as I came up, "is that you? I have got something here for you—a letter for your mother, Mrs. Lambard. I have had it in my pocket these four or five days, and had quite forgotten it; but seeing you this morning at the post office reminded me of it. The fact is, you see, I caught sight of it among the letters at the post office a few minutes after your servant had gone the other day, and I myself had heard that rascally fellow tell him there was nothing for his lady, or for you; but you never can trust the scoundrels, and ought always to insist upon seeing for yourself—that was what all that scrimmage was about this morning."

"I am obliged to you," I answered as civilly as I could manage to do, "but, all the same, I wish you had left it alone; my mother has suffered much from anxiety which this letter might have spared her."

"Well, but that is the very point; I meant her to have got it sooner, you see; and as I had had the honour of making her acquaintance, I thought it would be only a polite opportunity to come and call, so I put it in my pocket, meaning to bring it as once, but, unluckily it went quite out of my head; and then we went for a little excursion down to Lucce,

with the Contessa di Sotto-Nabia and some other charming friends, and the fact is only returned late last evening; but better late than never, you know. But is madame your lady mother at home? for I should like to have the honour of presenting it, and apologising to her in person."

The cool impudence of the animal positively took my breath away.

"No," I said; "she is not at home; never is; but give me the letter, if you please." And without another word I walked in and straight upstairs with the letter, leaving him to digest my rudeness as he liked upon the door-step.

Four or five days he said he had had it; it must have been more.

It was from my poor father, written in high spirits, particularly at having received such a good account of myself and my steady recovery of health. The letter was, I could perceive, an answer to one written by my mother, on the very morning of that unlucky rencontre at the Uffizi; and what an unhappy change had come over the whole spirit of our life since!

"The family business," his letter went on to say, "would all end right, and be brought to a satisfactory arrangement. That he hoped to be able to start the next day from London, and to arrive at Florence (not intending to stop for a single hour en route) almost at the same time, with or within a very few hours after this letter itself."

There was a postscript which specially concerned myself.

* * * * *

"I am quite delighted at your excellent account of Frank, and am glad that he seems to take the great interest which you describe in all the pictures, frescoes, sculptures, and other works of art. I wish you would desire him to write me a good long letter himself, on that or any other subject which may especially occur to him; but as I shall not be sure of my whereabouts, he had better put his letter under cover, marked private, to Mr. Wyley, my confidential lawyer. It will please and gratify me very much, and may prove of great importance to himself. I will explain this when we meet."

It was a very queer fancy, and to this day I never can quite make out what it meant, unless he had been backing my orthographical powers, and had a bet with his solicitor, who was, I knew, a very intimate friend, upon the subject.

But I do not think it struck me so much at the time as it might have done, for when we came to consider the date of the letter there was something else to think about. My heart instantly misgave me: the date was October the 19th, and this was the 30th.

If he had started as he intended, and come express, even allowing for the delay occasioned by the steamer not suiting exactly, he ought to have arrived here three days since the very latest.

Perhaps those other letters which I had caught sight of, but which had been confiscated, might explain the cause of his delay, or change in his plans; but though my glimpse at them had been hasty, I felt sure that neither of them were directed in my father's handwriting.

I did not like to communicate my half-conceived misgivings to my mother; and though I noticed the colour of her cheek blanch, perhaps being conscious of her chilling injustice towards myself, she could not quite bring herself to confide her secret terrors to me.

Calling to mind the thousand and one hindrances which may always arise and cause delay in an intended journey, I do not think I should at once have felt so uneasy if it had not been for the fact of Gorles being again mixed up with the matter. It was entirely his confounded officiousness which had intercepted that letter; though of course, upon reflection, I had to own that that fact could have nothing in the world to do with my father's non-arrival.

I made up my mind that I must somehow get these letters from the Poste-restante, in spite of the outraged official, or the absurd regulations in regard to the facts of which he had so unluckily availed himself, to punish me for aiding and abetting in the attack upon him, so I started off for the Chancellerie of our English minister, to see if I could get any help in that quarter. One of the attaches, Tripper, was an old friend of mine.

When I walked in I found them all busy, as usual, reading the English papers, and discussing the latest news, as is of course the duty of well-regulated diplomatists to do.

"Halloa, I say!" broke out young Tripper, all at once, after civilly pointing with his toe to his own vacant chair, he himself being seated in the middle of his own blotting-book, and gracefully swinging his legs; "here is something like a smash on one of the French railways—the Boulogne and Paris line—with I don't know how many killed, wounded, and

broken into little pieces. It is not often that the French try to rival us in a good out-and-out catastrophe of this sort, but here they have quite succeeded."

"Oh," said one of the other fellows, "I don't suppose we should have heard anything more about it, if it had not been for the number of English among the killed and wounded. Good heavens, sir! what is the matter? Tripper, quick there, confound you! Look to your friend!"

When I came to myself they were pouring cold water over my face and down my throat, while the secretary, who was a thick-set fellow, was holding me upon the chair.

Tripper and the other attaché had pulled off the buttons of my shirt collar, and the former was fanning my face violently with the blotting book on which he had been sitting.

There were only half-a-dozen or so names given of those who had been as yet recognised among the killed, and my father's name was not amongst that list; but the account went on to state that there were many whose identity had not yet been ascertained, and it was quite evident that the account itself had been sent secondhand by some correspondent in Paris, and not from anyone who had actually witnessed or even knew any particulars of the catastrophe.

It was on the strength of this that my friends tried kindly to reassure me, and to give me hopes that after all my father had not been perhaps even in that particular train; or at any rate may have been amongst those who had escaped unhurt; and though perhaps shaken and delayed on his journey, would arrive safe after all.

But I had an internal conviction from the first that all such hopes were unfounded, and that he was amongst those who were injured, perhaps killed on the spot.

Those two letters of which I had caught a glimpse, addressed to my mother and myself in a strange hand, were now explained, and I never for an instant doubted would confirm our most fearful anticipations.

I implored them to lose no time in aiding me by an official application through their chief, himself to the Minister of the Postes, to procure those letters for me; and in the meantime making a strong effort to rouse and control my own feelings, I set off home, to get back at once to my poor mother, knowing, of course, that the dreadful news must be broken to her; though dreading and hardly knowing how to set about that painful task.

My heart had utterly refused to entertain the faintest shadow of hope while at the Chancellerie; but as I returned home, and was almost approaching our own door, the thought struck me that perhaps after all he might not have been there, or might have escaped.

Until I was sure beyond all doubt, would it not be cruel to overwhelm, to crush down my poor mother? as of course I knew I should, with the same alarm and forebodings which I myself was struggling against, perhaps after all, without cause.

"No news, you know, is good news," the youngest attaché had suggested, as I was leaving their room; meaning, as I knew, with that trite old proverb to offer the best comfort he could.

But then those letters at the post office! at any rate, I thought, I would go back and wait till I could get those letters, which might confirm, or perhaps dissipate, my worst fears.

So back I went all the way to the Chancellerie; and was rather disgusted, I remember, at finding them discussing some other topic of interest which had also occupied a prominent column in the papers, and I can tell you even now what the subject of their discussion was: it was the public reception of Kossuth, the great Hungarian demagogue, on his arrival at Southampton, and again in London.

They seemed to me to be a set of heartless hypocrites, for I thought they really had sympathised and entered into my own fearful anxiety and grief; but I suppose I did them wrong: as long as I was with them they really had felt kindly and sorrowfully with me; but when I was gone, why should they care more than any other people who were not personally interested in the calamity?

But at the time it hurt me sorely; and merely asking permission to sit down and wait till an answer could be received to the special application for my letters, I did not care to speak a single word, or pay the least attention to them, each advocating his own special opinion as they were, at the top of their voices, and all talking at once.

It seemed to me like hours and hours, four or five, or even six I should have said; but it really was a considerable time, and with no small trouble, and ending backwards and forwards official con-

respondence, before I at length gained possession of the recovered letters.

They were both from the same person, signing himself S. Harrison, or some such name, the one which was addressed to my mother merely briefly stating that my father had been severely injured in a railway collision near Abbeville, but not dangerously so, and had been taken in, with some others rescued from the same catastrophe, to a private house, not far from the railway; that the writer having himself happily escaped unhurt, had been able to give some assistance to those who were less fortunate than himself; and as soon as General Lambard had sufficiently recovered to be able to say who he was, and to what friends or relatives he might wish to announce the mischief which had befallen him, had lost no time in communicating at once according to his desire to our address at Florence.

The second letter, which had evidently come by a day's post later, though they seemed only to have arrived together, was to me, and I was happy to see written from the dictation of my father himself, merely telling the fact of the accident, without any particulars, beyond that he had badly fractured one arm, and had received, he had reason to fear, some severe internal injury, besides suffering severely from the shock; and that it would be a great comfort to him if both my mother and myself would set out at once, and go to him with as little delay as possible.

Now knowing the worst, I made the best of my way home to my mother, trying in my mind to arrange how best to break the awful news, for manage it as I might, I knew what a fearful blow it must be to her.

On opening the outer door of our apartments, I was surprised to find the whole of the vestibule, or small entrance, occupied by a huge box, on which was seated a female form, muffled up and swathed in many shawls and coverings; while the battered form of her headgear, from which some straggling locks hung down in anything but graceful tresses, betokened unmistakeably all the many discomforts and disarrangements of a voyage.

"Hello!" I cried, "who have we here? Who may you please be waiting for here, ma'am?"

She turned to reply.

To my immense astonishment I recognised Harrison, my aunt Mrs. De Lornie's maid.

"Why, where on earth have you turned up from?" I inquired, as soon as I had recovered my surprise, which almost took my breath away. "Is your young lady—Miss Katie come to Florence?"

Why is it, I again repeat, that when our feelings have been most shocked and strained with any real grief, they are at the same time always so keenly susceptible to a sense of the ridiculous?

I was really ashamed of myself, as an unfeeling brute, as I caught myself going off into one of my screams of laughter as Mrs. Harrison, in the most dismal tone, answered:

"Ah, Mr. Frank, you may well say turned up, indeed!—turned inside out from my very knee-pains, for all the world like an old kid glove, would be no more than the truth, after the awful night I've passed on them tempestuous ocean waves between Ginever, where we come from last night, to what's the name of the place, where all them best English straw bonnets and hats comes from. Turned up, indeed, I have been, and no mistake! Why, if some one had just took and tossed me over the steam packet's side, I think I should have been ready to thank him on my bended knees for his kindness in putting me out of my misery. Miss Katie!—oh, she ain't here, bless your heart—but missus only come all alone, leastways bringing me for my sins with her; and come too seemingly not before she is really wanted. But Lor', dear Mr. Frank, this is awful news indeed which we have brought along with us; and for goodness gracious sake make haste to go in, for I have heard your poor dear mamma through the wall, not the key-hole, a crying out for you between her sobs again and again."

Mr. D. Lornie had arrived sure enough, and so saved me from the painful duty which I had been so much dreading.

She and her husband, the colonel, with their family, had, as it seemed, after trying one place and another in the north of Italy, finally settled themselves at Genoa.

Quite by chance the colonel had met with some old acquaintance who had himself been in the accident, but had escaped scot free, and so continued his route for Italy without losing more than a few hours delay.

He had given an account of having seen, amongst other people, my poor father, whom he knew by sight but not personally, taken out from beneath the broken carriages, and laid on one side amongst the dead.

No sooner had my uncle brought home this dreadful news, than his wife, like an affectionate and impulsive creature as, to give her her due, she certainly was, insisted upon setting off immediately, and coming on under the convoy of the gentleman who had brought the news, to comfort and support her sister in her terrible affliction.

It was she, who thus bursting in upon my mother unexpectedly, and of course making sure that the bad news had already reached us, bad as they were, actually brought a much worse account of the sad affair than really was the case.

It nearly killed my poor mother on the spot—but there I must pass over that dreadful time; I never can bear to think of it.

The two letters which I had brought with me, so far from dealing the heavy blow I had been anticipating, were now, of course, in comparison, an actual alleviation and source of fresh hope to us. But I must tell you how my aunt treated me.

It struck me when upon finding her by my mother's bedside, as of course I did, that she received my greeting and thanks for her prompt arrival rather coldly; but we were all in such a state of excitement, and confabulation of grief and fright, that I did not take so much notice of her manner towards me at first, until having come out into the other rooms, I did not think it would have been out of place, even under the circumstances, to grasp her two hands, which, in the warmth of my gratitude and joy at seeing her again, I was endeavouring to kiss.

I had been really fond of her, though she used sometimes to bore me, and cause me to laugh at her in my sleeve; still we had always been on the best of terms, which made it all the harder to bear and even understand, when, drawing herself up very stiffly, and in a tone of the most freezing dignity, she said:

"No thank you, sir; keep your distance, if you please. I only wonder that after your conduct towards your poor mother, of which I have received a full account, coupled with the protestations and pretension of only a few months since, that you can even dare to look me, or any of my family, in the face. Brought hither as I have been by my affectionate solicitude for my unfortunate sister, I had almost hoped to find you keeping out of the way altogether, as indeed you were when I arrived, and have been for so many hours since the morning, with some of your evil chosen associates, no doubt, whose company is more lively and more suited to your degraded tastes, than what you find in this house of mourning. With me, at least, pray never expect to be admitted on our old terms of intimacy!"

I was perfectly thunderstruck.

It really was a very good thing for me that there was so much to be done, and settled, and thought about, or I really think I should have been driven by their injustice to have done something desperate.

I had been longing in my heart to hear some tidings of Kate; I had hoped that at least she would have told me how she was going on, and whether she was well and happy again.

(To be Continued.)

DORA'S ENGAGEMENT.

As he came through a wood he saw her sitting on a green bank, as if in pensive thought, with a book lying idly in her lap, idly plucking the wild-flowers at her side.

Very pretty she was in her dark summer attire; Grosvenor Marie thought that, in her tranquil attitude, with her rather pale face, which few emotions appeared: ever to have stirred, she must look very much as the sleeping beauty did, if that young person ever roused herself enough during her hundred years of slumber to make a pretence of doing a little in the heart of her forest.

He wished devoutly that the sight of her could have brought a downright earnest thrill to his heart, as ought to be the case with a man regarding the girl to whom he was engaged, but it did not.

He was in doubt whether to be most irritated with himself or her, that in this first moment of seeing her, after a fortnight's separation, he could throw no halo of romance about the situation.

He had thought many times during his absence that he should be able to do so. He had kept her picture on his dressing-table, and read and re-read the letters she wrote him, and told himself that his calm affection for her was better worth feeling, more to be trusted than the wild dream which had

brightened his early youth for a time, and died out, to leave such an aching void behind.

Then, as ill luck would have it, she must be the very one to disturb his carefully acquired peace, by some news which she had added to one of her last epistles.

She wrote him that Mrs. Sidney and her brother had come to St. Germain, and established themselves in an apartment quite near, and meant to spend the autumn there. Dora found Mrs. Sidney delightful; even mamma was pleased with her, and heaven knew Mrs. Somers was not easy to please, though Dora did not add that, or even think it, for she was a marvel in this century, a young woman who believed in the perfection of her parents.

Mrs. Sidney had come. Grosvenor wished her anywhere than there, then was angry with himself for feeling an emotion or wish of any sort concerning her. Mrs. Sidney had told Dora that she and Grosvenor were old acquaintances, and Dora wrote him that she was glad, but she could not remember her ever mentioning the handsome widow.

She liked the brother, too, only he looked a little dissipated; but Mrs. Sidney said that came from his delicate health, and certainly the devotion between him and his sister was lovely to see.

Other persons had appeared upon the scene also. American friends of the Somers', some French people whom Mrs. Sidney knew, and had introduced to them; and altogether, the sojourn in the quiet old place promised to be very pleasant, and Dora was glad that the time for Grosvenor's return was so close at hand.

And now he was back; he had sent the carriage on to his house with the luggage, and had got out to walk through a corner of the forest which had a path that led to the villa where the Somers had made their home for the last year or two.

He was back; he had returned at the very hour he had written to Dora to expect him; had asked her to come and sit in the wood, that he might meet her first, without even the presence of mamma, who, in her best moods, was a species of human iceberg, calculated to chill the warmest sentiments, and who would have greeted her own husband after his absence from a voyage round the world with a cool good-morning, and the tips of her frosty fingers.

He almost wished now that he had not proposed this poetic meeting; he felt so deadly commonplace and bare of romance, that he could have preferred to meet Dora in the society of the elders, and allowed the greetings to be arranged with a proper respect for Mrs. Somers' frigid demeanour. But he had no longer time to attempt to analyse his feelings, for Dora looked up suddenly, and saw him.

The greetings might as well have taken place in mamma's presence, so cold and composed was the lady.

Grosvenor took her hand, even touched his lips to her cheek.

There was a deepened tinge of colour upon it, and her soft blue eyes looked brighter; still she held the book in her disengaged fingers, and almost the first words she said were:

"I didn't think it was time for the train yet. Dear Mr. Grosvenor, how very brown you are, and you've a purple cravat on. I've asked you so often not to wear purple!"

It did not occur to him that all this might be the effect of a certain shyness on her part—a fear of showing how much she was moved by his return, for their engagement had not been an affair of long duration.

"I'm sorry I am before my time," he answered; "and I'll take off the obnoxious cravat as soon as we get to the house. As for the brown, I think you must blame the sun, not me."

He said it all so good-naturedly that she did not perceive his vexation, and only laughed in her quiet manner.

"You say things in such a droll way," returned she. "You must be very tired, I am sure."

He caught eagerly at that excuse for the dullness and deadness which had come over fancy and heart.

"Dreadfully tired," he answered.

"We'll go home at once," she said. "You shall have some tea, and change your clothes. That will rest you."

A wife of ten years could not have been more practical in her thoughtfulness; but men are ungrateful wretches, and Grosvenor was anything but touched by her care.

They walked slowly homeward, she leaning on his arm; but, actually, before taking it, she brushed the dust off his sleeve with her pocket-handkerchief! She had been reared in such an oppressive atmosphere of order, that these tiresome little habits were as natural to her as breathing. She talked gaily enough, with more animation than her wont; and



[COMING THROUGH THE WOOD.]

he talked too, but there was nothing in their conversation which required privacy.

She told him about the new people, extolled Mrs. Sidney, gave a rather painfully detailed account of a picnic, hoped that he had not played at those dreadful tables in Baden, made much of a slight illness which Fright, her dog, had suffered.

Poor girl, she had been directed, and trained, and trammelled by her severe mother, until it seemed in her eyes almost a crime to let her thoughts soar beyond the narrow groove in which Mrs. Somers had decreed that the thoughts of young ladies ought to dwell.

They reached the rustic gate which gave entrance to the villa-grounds. As he was opening it, Dora actually did say:

"Are you glad to be back, Grosvenor?"

He tried then with all his might to be, and was half way through a neat enough speech, when her attention became distracted.

"You didn't latch the gate, Grosvenor," she said.

He went back and latched it; but he made no further effort to do poetry.

Near the house they met Mrs. Somers, a tall, fine-looking woman, but so rigid and angular that Grosvenor often had an absurd fancy that she must originally have been begun as a geometrical illustration. She looked first at her watch, then shook his hand, was as glad to see him as her nature permitted, and said:

"I have been expecting you for ten minutes; how very brown you are, Grosvenor."

They went into the house, and found Mr. Somers in the hall reading his newspaper. He rose in his creaking boots, and there was more subdued hand shaking, and he said:

"Ha! Back, eh? Glad to see you; how very brown you are, Grosvenor."

And Grosvenor Marie remembered that he was

only six-and-twenty years of age; that he came of a long-lived race; that Somers pere and his spouse were safe to live as long as the patriarchs, and that this was a neat specimen of what life was to be to him; he wondered a little why some conveniently broken rail could not have dashed the train down a high embankment a few miles below St. Germain."

"I think Grosvenor ought to have some tea, mamma," said Dora, with a boldness of assertion unusual on her part.

"I have ordered dinner half an hour before our time," Mrs. Somers replied; "still, if Grosvenor

"I'll have some sherry and soda, I believe," added Grosvenor, whereupon Mrs. Somers looked rather more rigid than common; but she rang the bell, and ordered the cooling draught, though he did turn his back to the lady while pouring out the sherry, and, considering the amount he took, it was as well for the peace of the family.

More desultory talk, then Mrs. Somers perceived that Grosvenor was dusty, and sent him away to his chamber to bathe and dress, his luggage having safely arrived; but before he left the room she added:

"How very brown you are, Grosvenor."

And Mrs. Somers creaked in his boots again, and said, with the air of a man originating some powerful proposition:

"You are very brown, Grosvenor."

Then poor Dora felt that the young man might consider it meant as a reproach, and quavered;

"It's very becoming to him, papa."

But Mrs. Somers looked pained and alarmed at having transgressed the rules of propriety. Dora, before she knew it, blurted out:

"You are very brown, Grosvenor."

Grosvenor fled, and once more wished himself in

the train on the top of the high embankment, with a broken rail in front. Life is not easy. Most of us have lived long enough to know that it was not meant to be; but I think if we can keep from losing our souls in sheer disgust of its monotonous and petty side, we need have little fear of the great temptations.

Grosvenor Marie had been Mr. Somers' ward. He called Mrs. Somers aunt, because that lady had been his father's step-sister, though there was no blood relationship between them.

He had not lived much in their house during his youth, though styling it home, and going there to spend a portion of his college vacations.

It was a household in which for fifteen years Mrs. Somers declared, with pride, the dinner-hour had not varied five minutes—Mr. Somers had never once hung up his hat on the wrong peg.

She lived by rule, and had brought up husband and child to do so; her law was as the law of the Medes and Persians.

She believed herself a Christian, but she was a heathen, and worshiped a heathen goddess called Propriety.

She had crushed and moulded everybody about her; and poor little Dora had no more idea of having an independent thought than she had of going up in a balloon.

When Grosvenor was between twenty-two and three the family departed for Europe; then followed his love story; then the darkness fell.

Eighteen months before the time of which I write, he had sailed for France—found Dora grown into a woman.

How it came about he could scarcely have told, but this spring they had become engaged, and before winter they were to be married—this was all life had done for him so far; he could not feel that it was much.

He was rather an idle man, given to writing poetry and painting pictures; a man with a good deal of imagination, believing that he wanted peace and quiet, whereas he needed occupation and excitement.

Dinner was over; a long, dreary meal it had been to Grosvenor, for Mrs. Somers had taken a great deal of the conversation into her own hands, and seemed determined to discover whether Grosvenor had employed his time during the past fortnight in acquiring useful information.

She wanted to know the population of Baden, to have a compendium of the history of the Duchy, and numerous other details of equal interest, till at length Grosvenor politely offered to put his guide-books at her disposal, frankly declaring that he had no taste for useful information himself—in fact, making a habit of avoiding it whenever he could. The iceberg had no intention of being a bore and a nuisance; she was fonder of the young man than of almost anybody in the world; but she could not help patronising, and would have put the angel Gabriel through his catechism, if she could have got hold of him, and set the seraphic personage right without hesitation.

Dora grew rather nervous when she noticed Grosvenor's impatience. She lived in constant dread of some outbreak between him and her mother, and tried, in her feeble way, to change the conversation a little; but she could think of nothing better than to ask:

"Were there many Russian princesses there, and do they all gamble?"

Now, in spite of this, I aver that the poor child was not a fool!

Just try living for six months with a woman like Mrs. Somers, and you shall feel your intellect, though it be equal to Milton's, gradually becoming fussy and weedy.

Grosvenor did her more justice than many men would have done, but before he could answer, Mrs. Somers said:

"I beg you'll not ask about such things, Dora. Gambling is scarcely the subject for a young lady to select, nor can the manners of Muscovite women of any class be a matter that will warrant discussion."

"Never mind, Dora," said Grosvenor. "Some day we will go and see the awful things they do at the tables."

"My dear boy!" sighed Mrs. Somers.

Grosvenor only laughed and rose from his seat.

"I am going out into the shrubberies to smoke my cigar," he said. "Will you come, Dora?"

"Be sure and tie up your throat, dear," added Mrs. Somers. "Ah, Grosvenor, still persevering in that dreadful habit—"

"I never tie up my throat, ma'am," he interrupted.

Dora giggled; then looked frightened under the frigid glance with which her mother favoured her.

"Of smoking, Grosvenor. If you would only read that pamphlet of Dr. Watts!"

"I always understood he wrote hymns, aunt."
"I mean the London physician. Why will you make a jest of everything?"

"You must take me as I am, aunt. I'm too old for improvement," he said, good-naturedly.

He absolutely stopped to kiss her as he passed, for fear she should read Dora a lecture, since she could not venture further with him. Certainly Grosvenor had his good points, and he was honestly trying to make the best of the life he had chosen—if we can ever be said to choose our lots.

"You are an incorrigible boy," Mrs. Somers said, relapsing into a smile, for Grosvenor could coax her as no other human being had ever been able to do, and she absolutely let them depart without further remonstrance.

"I'll tell you what, Dorá," said Grosvenor as they crossed the lawn, "the mamma gets more dreadful every day."

"Oh, don't!" cried Dora, horrified.

"Well, then, I won't; but one thing, when we do go off on a bridal trip, we'll stay at least two years."

Dora blushed at that, but hastened to add:

"I'm sure mamma would not like it; she expects us to live with her. She told me so; she always says that!"

"Ah!" returned Grosvenor, choosing a cigar out of his case. He said no more; but Mrs. Somers might have trembled a little for her absolute authority, had she heard the tone in which he uttered the monosyllable.

They had a quiet hour to themselves, and Grosvenor, soothed by his dinner and cigar, listened to Dora's girlish chatter, and put aside a portion of the dreary thoughts which had so sorely shaken his composure on his return.

Then, across the lawn, through the late twilight, came Mrs. Sidney and her brother, with a little bevy of the Somers', other new acquaintances following. There was any quantity of laughing and talking, of course; and Grosvenor found himself being presented to the strangers, and after awhile talking to Mrs. Sidney and all without any of the deep emotion which he had dreaded.

But it was some time before Mrs. Sidney came in his way. She had encountered Mrs. Somers, and stopped to speak to her, while her brother came on with the rest of the party; and he and Grosvenor greeted each other a little stiffly, as men usually do new masculine acquaintances, for it so chanced that they had never met before—George Manning not having been with his sister during the summer she had known Marie at Newport.

Presently, Mrs. Sidney was beside him, and saying:

"It was too bad of us to come and interrupt the pretty tableau; but the rest would not stay at home, so I thought I might as well accompany them."

"That was very kind of you," he answered, and began talking about the beautiful evening, the fine weather he had had for his journey; and she accepted the position so easily, that one might have supposed they had been in the habit of meeting every day for weeks past.

Mrs. Sidney had been a widow for two years. She still wore dainty lavender and whites as a sort of badge of mourning; and occasionally did a bit of sentiment or melancholy, for the benefit of people on whom it was likely to create a favourable impression.

Her married life had been a very brief one; no love in it on her side—she was not capable of much sound, honest feeling. She was rich now, and had no mind to give up her freedom, though she must be in mischief of some kind, and there had been a fixed plan in her mind from the time she had first known Dora Somers in Italy. She wanted her to marry George Manning.

He was an idle, rather extravagant fellow, and since his sister's widowhood commenced, had showed a determination to live tranquilly on her money, by no means pleasing to that lady; for she was very fond of her money, and though ready to spend it liberally on herself, had no desire to share it among her needy relations.

It was a disappointment when she discovered the engagement between Dora and Grosvenor Marie; but she was not yet at the end of her resources. If that tie could be broken, Dora might accept George from pique, or, as many girls do marry in such cases, the fear of the world's believing that she had been jilted.

At all events, in the quiet life decorum still compelled Mrs. Somers to lead, some species of excitement was necessary to her; and it would be amusing to bring Grosvenor Marie once more under the spell of her fascinations.

She had flirted outrageously with him for a whole season, and married Mr. Sidney at the end of it, because he was much the richer of the two. Perhaps she had cared more for Marie than she did for anybody else.

Indeed, she had tried to feel romantic and unhappy at the time of her marriage; but luxury and physical comforts were so much to her, that she could never make her clear head view the matter in any other than a calm light.

This present meeting caused her no deeper feeling than one of vexation that he should stand between her and her schemes for ridding herself of her brother.

When the next two weeks ended, Dora Somers had known more real suffering than had ever come near her during the whole previous course of her life.

Her affection for Grosvenor had been so gradual in its growth, of such long continuance, that, in her girlish innocence, she had herself been unaware of its full strength, until clouds arose to trouble the calmness of the sky.

The widow played her part very artfully, and flattered Mrs. Somers so adroitly, that this lady went about magnificently blind to what was going on, and there was nobody else to notice, except Dora. She was so young and childish, that it seemed almost odd that she should have judged the matter so clearly as she did. She was not even jealous, in the ordinary acceptance of the term; but she suffered cruelly, and when those two weeks closed, which had been seemingly so pleasant, so full of amusement and variety, she was a whole life away from the careless existence of the past.

She was not used to analysing people's motives, or doing mental anatomy on her own account, but she was marvellously clear-sighted in this case. Not even to her mother did she utter a syllable; indeed, she fairly shrank from that stately creature during this time, and was shocked at the new light in which she regarded the composed mastery the woman exercised over her family.

She could see, too, how the horrible monotony of this mathematically-arranged household must weary a man like Grosvenor—how her own commonplace habits of conversation must fret him.

Mrs. Somers would have looked aghast indeed, could she have seen the way in which Dora dashed papa's Essay on Man (Mrs. Somers' beau ideal of poetry) upon the floor, and fairly wished that she had had an idiot for a mother, instead of this strong-minded matron, who so carefully superintended her reading; and if she allowed her to indulge in a novel, religiously went over it first, and usually tore out half a dozen pages, in the most interesting part, because they did not suit her fastidious ideas.

Dora grew positively to hate Mrs. Sidney, with her pretty, caressing ways, and her lazy, musical voice; but she hated that mild youth, George Manning worse, for it was he who had helped to open her eyes.

"I shall keep by you," he had a habit of saying, when the young people were off upon some party of pleasure. "You and I are commonplace characters, you know, and its awfully fatiguing to hear Mrs. Sidney and Marie always doing poetry."

He had let out also, in his blundering way, something in regard to the old flirtation between those two, and Dora put the whole history together for herself without difficulty.

As for Grosvenor Marie, he was not thinking at all in these days. I never met a man so strong that he had not a weak side, and Mrs. Sidney knew what Grosvenor's was, and acted accordingly. The very day after their first encounter, she had said to him:

"I want to be good friends, so I must speak frankly. I could not do it under other circumstances; but now that you are engaged and happy, I may set myself right in your opinion, without risk of appearing unwomanly."

So she told him a very pretty story, about having been obliged to sacrifice herself for her family—that she had done it cheerfully, and the belief that she had behaved right kept her from useless regret.

"Life is not exactly like one's youthful dreams," she said, with a sad, beautiful smile; "but it does very well."

She managed, however, to make the life he had chosen for himself appear in its dullest, most tiresome light, and filled him with a dread that Dora's soul and imagination could never be lifted out of the petty groove in which it had been her mother's study to train them.

He had no mind to fall in love anew with this woman—at the bottom he had a certain suspicion of her honesty; but she duped him notwithstanding. Day by day the confidential friendship grew, and Dora watched the clouds gather about her path, and was ready to cry out that the world had come to an end; nothing was left her but to lie down and die, and leave Grosvenor to this enchantment, who had stolen his heart from her.

I think nothing but Dora's innate dignity and sweetness of character saved her happiness from utter shipwreck during that season.

Most girls would have been tiresome with reproaches, caprice, ill-temper; but Dora visited neither upon him.

In her humility she told herself that perhaps she could never grow enough out of the dwarfing influences of her old life to be fully his companion. If it was for his happiness she could give him up; only it was hard to be forsaken for this woman, whose falsity and shallowness the girl instinctively felt.

The tedious habits of the household so weighed upon her mind, that she was always glad when anything happened to interfere with them—glad even to greet Mrs. Sidney, since her presence could bring a little change and brightness.

She told a great many fibs in those days; excusing Grosvenor to her mother when he was not punctual at meals; accounting for his frequent absences—doing all she could to keep that lady from suspecting the truth, for she knew that if a gleam of it reached her, she would descend upon the young man in all her awful might; and Dora felt that after such a catastrophe, she could never hold up her head again.

I cannot tell how it might have ended, if Fate had not interposed. Dora accepted her discipline so meekly and patiently, trying so hard from the first to make a right use of it, that the tempest passed, without blighting her whole future under its darkness.

Marie had been up to Paris for the day on some business of Mrs. Somers' and his own.

He was not expected to return before the ten o'clock train; but he finished his affairs early, and it was only slight when he got out at the St. Germain Station.

His walk homed him past Mrs. Sidney's lodgings, the ground floor of a pretty cottage, not far distant from the forest.

He saw her sitting on her veranda among her flowers, looking such an image of peace and rest, that he was glad to stop at her summons, and escape in her society the dreary thoughts which had been with him all day.

"George is off with some friends," Mrs. Sidney said. "I had reconciled myself to a lonely evening; but, as you are not expected to arrive these two hours, I think you might have pity on my stupidity."
"You mean you will have pity on mine," he answered.

"Put it in any way you please," said she. "But perhaps, you've not dined, and I can only give you some tea, for I dined at your—"

But he had eaten an early dinner, and only cared for some tea, so she served him a delicious cup, and looked like Circe pouring out enchanted nectar.

There they sat talking for a full hour, and Marie was just thinking how doubly commonplace the Somers' mansion would appear after this tete-a-tete, when George Manning came upon them; and George had evidently spent too gay a day of it with his friends, for his step was slightly unsteady, and his tongue tripped over his consonants in an alarming manner.

"Oh, George! George!" Mrs. Sidney said, reproachfully.

"You can't scold," returned he, with a rather idiotic laugh. "Marie's here, and you know your little dodge before him."

"Go up to your own room for a while, like a good boy," she said, quietly, though, as she spoke, she laid her hand warningly on his arm, and gave him a look, unseen by Marie, which did not well agree with the composure of her voice.

"Oh, come now," said he, "you needn't glare at me in that fashion! I'm not to be coaxed like a child. Just don't you aggravate me."

Mrs. Sidney sighed, and returned to her seat by Marie.

"You had better go," she said, softly. "I don't like you to see him like this. It does not often happen. I know you will not even tell Dora."

"What about Dora?" called George, with a hiccupping laugh. "I say, Marie, when are we going to have done playing at cross purposes?"

"My dear fellow," returned Grosvenor, with good-natured contempt, "your meaning is as unintelligible as your pronunciation. Your best plan is to follow your sister's advice, and go to bed at once."

"Egad! I could tell you rather more about her plans than you know," returned George. "Couldn't I, missy?"

"George, there are limits to my patience," said Mrs. Sidney. Stop talking, and go to your room, else you will regret it."

"I'll do what I like, uninvited George, becoming lachrymose. "You're always hating me, and I don't care what happens! You're fooling Marie, and all the while you mean to buy a coronet with your money, I know."

Mrs. Sidney's violent temper got so much the

upper hand of her for a few moments that she uttered a good many harsh, bitter things, and, in return, George rendered very clear, in spite of his indistinct speech, the little game she had been playing.

"I will bid you good-night, Mrs. Sidney," Marle said, rising.

She went up to him and held out her hand. "I don't know what you say," she exclaimed, tremulously. He will not remember his idiocy to-morrow."

George had seated himself by a table, and let his head sink on his arms. Evidently he had reached the stage where slumber was overtaking him.

"You see something of what I am obliged to suffer," she went on, glancing back at her brother, to make sure that he would not add to the harm he had done by some further malapropos speech. Then she looked up at Marle and sighed; but Marle's face did not show much sympathy, and he touched the fingers she offered as carelessly as if they had been those of the iceberg.

"Oh, Grosvenor!" she exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you pay any attention to a drunken man's nonsense. You can't let it influence you for an instant."

"How could you fancy such a thing," he replied, but not easily, and he showed plainly that he wanted to get away.

"I'll not keep you," she said, in a trembling voice. "I can't expect aid or sympathy from any quarter. I must live my life alone, and bear my burdens as best I can, without help."

"Oh, George will be all right to-morrow," returned Grosvenor, composedly, quite ignoring her very pathetic appeal.

"And you? Can it be possible, Grosvenor, that I have lost my friend? That you could credit such folly as he talked—could suspect—"

She broke off to do a shudder of distress, and wrung her white hands very neatly.

"I beg you'll not think of such a thing; Mrs. Sidney," he replied. "I shan't remember a word any more than he will."

But there was a cheerful alacrity in his voice anything but reassuring.

"You are very good—very kind," she quivered. "You want to go—I'll not detain you."

For George had stirred, and she was in mortal fear that he would lift his head, and give vent to another tirade.

"Good-night," Marle said, taking advantage of her words to step toward the door.

She followed him out on the veranda, and stopped him for a few last speeches; but though she looked handsome enough in her anger and distress, I think he did not feel so deeply for her as he might.

Walking homeward, so many incidents of the past weeks presented themselves which accorded perfectly with Manning's drunken revelations, that if they did not force him to admit frankly to himself that Mrs. Sidney had been playing a treacherous game, they at least set him thinking that his own part had not been quite in keeping with his ideas of duty and right, and he felt heartily ashamed of his weakness and vacillation.

In the salon he found Dora sitting alone. Mr. and Mrs. Somers had gone out to call upon some acquaintances who had that day arrived.

Dora greeted him quietly; but he saw the traces of tears on her cheeks.

"I didn't dream of finding you here alone," he said.

She did not answer; she chanced to know at what hour he returned; one of the servants had seen him enter Mrs. Sidney's house, and, of course, the news had not been long in reaching Dora.

"What on earth have you been writing? Don't you know you will spoil these pretty eyes, using them by these villainous lamps?"

She let him take some folded sheets of paper from her hand.

"I meant you to read them," she said. "Good night."

He was standing there alone, before he could recover from his surprise. He sat down, and read the letter—it was Dora's farewell.

It was not the epistle of a child or a commonplace woman; it was framed with an eloquence, a passion even, which would have shocked Mrs. Somers; but it was his dismissal.

He read the pages, and dashed upstairs. Dora was in her room, and the door was locked. She found herself obliged, at length, to answer him, lest he should rouse the servants by his frantic appeals. When she did appear, he took her in his arms, in spite of her struggles, saying:

"I've been an awful fool, my child; but it's not what you think! I never dreamed of loving that awful little cat; but I did underrate you. I'm ashamed enough for that to be my punishment. Don't be unforgiving, though I deserve that you

should be. Only give me one chance, because I love you, Dora!"

And, strong and decided as she had believed herself, Dora could not resist that appeal.

It was almost midnight when Mr. and Mrs. Somers reached home; but the young people were still walking up and down the moonlit lawn, and for the first time in her life, Mrs. Somers was not allowed to lecture at a transgression of her rules.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, Mrs. Sidney came upon Dora and Marle seated in the forest, in a spot where Marle had been sketching lately, but not before with Dora for his companion. And as the lady approached Marle rose, greeted her warmly, and cried:

"Congratulate me! Dora has at last set a term to my probation—we are to be married in October."

Luckily, at this instant several of their mutual acquaintances appeared, strolling through the wood, and Mrs. Sidney had an opportunity to hide her confusion in idle talk.

But each time she looked in Marle's eyes, she could see that she was visible to him at last in her true colours.

No retribution could have been sharper than that, unless it might be the sight of the happiness which brought such new beauty to Dora's face. F. L. B.

FACETIÆ.

RECENT EVENT AT AN HOTEL.

"Who's there?"

There was no answer, and the queer noise stopped.

"Anybody there?"

No answer.

"It must have been a spirit. I must be a medium. I will try."

Aloud:

"If there be a spirit in the room it will signify the same by saying aye—no, that's not what I mean. If there is a spirit in the room it will please rap three times."

Three very distinct raps were given in the direction of the bureau.

"Is it the spirit of my sister?"

No answer.

"Is it the spirit of my mother?"

Three raps.

"Are you happy?"

Nine raps.

"Do you want anything?"

A succession of very loud raps.

"Will you give me any communication if I get up?"

No answer.

"Shall I hear from you to-morrow?"

Raps very loud in the direction of the door.

"Shall I ever see you?"

Then raps came from outside the door.

He waited long for an answer to his last question, but none came.

The spirit had gone, and after thinking about the extraordinary visit, he turned over and fell asleep.

On getting up in the morning, he found that the spirit of his mother had carried off his watch and purse, his trousers, and his great coat downstairs in the hall.

THE DYING USURER.

A FAMOUS USURER of Paris being on his death-bed, his confessor presented a silver crucifix to him, with a view to awaken him to a sense of his situation.

The dying miser, after examining the cross with the most minute attention, suddenly exclaimed:

"Sir, I can lend you but a very small sum on such a pledge."

He who wrote "Would I were a bird," wouldn't like to be a city sparrow at this time.

THE MILKY WAY.—From the barn to the pump.

WHY should one always carry an old umbrella?—Because umbrellas are only good when they're used up.

OH, ye foolish virgins. Not another chance till 1880.

THE proper sort of wine for elderly spinsters.—Old Maid-cira.

A RECENT Amherst graduate, now a settled pastor, was telling a retired missionary that he entered college and the theological seminary with the intention of becoming a missionary, when the old veteran broke in with:

"Ah, you turned back after putting your hand to the plough?"

"No," was the answer, "I just took another plough."

WOLF MISSIONARIES.—Thousands of wolves are

killed every winter in the great basin of the Yellowstone, there being a ready cash market for the robes at all the frontier trading-posts. Many "wolves" realise 300 dols. a month during the "wolfing" season. These are the sort of fellows to send to Russia on a wolf exterminating mission.

A YOUNG lady in Indiana committed suicide the other day. Her last words were—"I did it because I did it." Yet, notwithstanding this laud statement, a great many people are still in doubt as to why she did it.

A FRISCO gentleman invited a friend the other evening to go to the nursery and hear the children say their prayers. They stopped a moment on the stairs, however, and when they reached the room, the little prattlers had just sung their evening hymn, and were trying to drown the kitten in the wash-bowl. The visitor appeared to be deeply moved.

THIS Christmas card was sent to the Postmaster-General. Of all the various methods proposed for the reduction of postage none are so practical as this—Get married.

CONVINCING.

A DAILY contemporary argues that Dr. Slade must know very well that the legal quibble on which he got off does not leave him less condemned. Of course he knows it. Why, he actually appealed against his own conviction! —Fun.

COMMERCIAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE Market Reports say, "The market is very firm for dry hides." So it ought to be this season. There can't be many about. —Fun.

A T TOTAL WRACK.

THE T pier at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, has been damaged considerably by a steamship running into it. They had to repair that T for fear it should breakfast. —Fun.

THE only place where a Conservative Government should be. A Reform a tory. —Fun.

HOW TO COMPOSE ONE'S SELF FOR A PORTRAIT.

A PHOTOGRAPHER gives the following directions to his customers:

"When a lady sitting for a picture would compose her mouth to a bland and serene character she should, just upon entering the room, say 'Bacon,' and keep the expression into which the mouth subsides until the desired effect in the camera is evident. If, on the other hand, she wishes to assume a distinguished and somewhat noble bearing, not suggestive of sweetness, she should say, 'Brash,' the result of which is infallible. If she wishes to make her mouth look small she must say, 'Flip,' but if the mouth be already too small and needs enlarging, she must say 'Cabbage.' If she wishes to look mournful, she must say 'Ker-chunk,' if resigned, she must forcibly ejaculate 'S'cat.'"

ADVICE.

A FARMER and his wife called at a photographic gallery last month, to have some photographs taken of the latter, and while the operator was getting ready the husband gave the wife a little advice as to how she was to act.

"Fasten your mind on something," he said, "or else you will laugh and spoil the job. Think about early days, and what you'd have been if I hadn't pitied you. Just fasten your mind on that!"

CHRISTIAN NAMES.

CLERGYMEN might be allowed to exercise some sort of censorship over the nomenclature of the lower classes, so as to refuse to baptize children by obviously ludicrous names. There is an instance of a child, who was christened "Mahershallal-hash-baz;" and there is now living at Canterbury a youth who rejoices in the name of "Acts of the Apostles" Jones.

A violent altercation also took place in a parish church owing to the officiating clergyman refusing to christen a child "Beelzebub."

These incidents are recalled by the perusal of the following extract of a letter, which appeared the other day in a contemporary:

"A High Church clergyman was asked to christen a child 'Venus,' or, as the sponsor, a labouring man, pronounced it 'Vanus.'"

"I will do nothing of the kind," said the clergyman. "In the first place, the child is a male, and Venus is the name of a woman; and in the second place, she was a very improper and abandoned character. How dare you wish this boy to be so called?"

"Well, sir, I don't know," said the sponsor, scratching his head, "but grandfeyther's name was Vanus, and we thought—"

"Your grandfather's name Venus! impossible. Where is he?"

"Grandfeyther" shuffled forward. He was eighty.

and almost double. He certainly did not look much like the Paphian goddess.

"Do you mean to say, old man, that you were christened Venus?"

"Well, no, sir; I was christened Silvanus, but they allus calls me 'Venus.'"

THE PORTS AND THE VATICAN.

Confound those European Powers,
A set of bogs and dogs and Giaours!
We knuckle down to their dictation?
We truckle to intimidation?
Submit to their conditions, we?
Concede our slaves autonomy?
We of the infidels afear'd?
No, never, by the Prophet's beard!
Like that old brick on Pet-r's throne,
Whose ease is so much like our own,—
If 'tis as pole resembles pole—
For whom we feel with all our soul,
Has one, and only one, reply,
When vexed with importunity,
So we, whenever pressed to do
The thing we are unwilling to,
Will let the Giaour get nought of us,
But a serene, "Non possumus!" —Punch.

HIS PRINCIPLE.

A Scotch father explained his principle of getting his girls off to an old friend whose daughters became rather old stock. He said, "I don't let him make many calls before I give him to understand he isn't wanted. I tell the girls, too, that they shall not have anything to do with him, and give them orders never to speak to him again. The plan works. The young folks begin to pity each other, and the next thing I know they are engaged to be married. When I see that they are determined to marry I always give in, and pretend to make the best of it. That's the way I manage it."

At a recent wedding a gentleman who was deficient in appropriate ideas for the occasion, brought as a present a fog horn, such as the fishing schooners use on the high seas in thick weather, to give warning of their presence and avoid collision with other vessels. Its note is an exceedingly low O—so low that, after one solo on it, the hearer would be glad to see it so low in the sea that none would ever see it again.

TRUE ARTISTIC REFINEMENT.

("Died of a colour, in æsthetic pain.")

HOSTESS: "We're going down to supper, Mr. Mirabel. Let me introduce you to Miss Obalmers."

MR. MIRABEL: "A—pardon me—is that the tall young lady standing by your husband?"

HOSTESS: "Yes. She's the most charming girl I know."

MR. MIRABEL: I've no doubt. But—a—she affects aniline dyes, don't you know? I weally couldn't go down to suppah with a young lady who wears mauve twimmings in her skirt, and magenta wibbons in her hair!" —Punch.

A TRUE PATRIOT.

YOUNG LADY TEACHER (in Welsh Sunday School): "Now, Jenkin Thomas, what grew in the middle of the garden of Eden?"

JENKIN THOMAS (promptly): "Leeks, Miss!" —Punch.

CHURCH IN HIGH STYLE.

RITUALISTIC HOSTESS: "Are you going to church with us this evening, Major?"

THE MAJOR: "Thanks, no! I was at the morning performance!" —Punch.

CULINARY CULTURE.

NEW COOK: "If you're going up-stairs, Mr. Ruggles, you might just tell my lady that if she can't write the 'menue' in French, I shall be very 'appy to do it for her!" —Punch.

STATISTICS.

MARRIAGES IN LONDON.—According to the Registrar General's annual report for the year 1876, the date of the last return, there were 33,248 marriages celebrated in London. Of this total 23,910 took place according to the rites of the Church, while 4,338 were not in conformity to the rites of the Establishment. Of the 23,910 Church marriages 10 were by special licence, 3,326 by the ordinary licence, 25,514 by banns, 37 were on production of the superintendent registrar's certificate, and in 21 cases the particulars were not stated. Of the 4,338 Nonconformist marriages, 1,108 were of Roman Catholics, 1,285 related to other Christian denominations, 1,634 took place in the registrar's office, 4 were of Quakers, and 337 of Jews. The marriages are thus distributed according to seasons:—In the March quarter, 6,500; in the June quarter, 8,639; in the Sep.

quarter, 8,833; and in the Dec. quarter, 9,176. As to the "civil condition" of the married, it appears that 27,032 marriages were between bachelors and spinners, 1,604 between bachelors and widows, 2,907 between widowers and spinners, and 1,705 were of widowers with widows. Altogether there were 4,612 widowers married, and 3,309 widows. As to the age of the married, it is stated that there were 1,531 men married under 21, and 5,532 women. There were 1,284 cases in which both the man and woman signed by mark, and there were 4,488 instances where one of the parties signed in a similar manner. Altogether there were 2,708 cases where the man signed by mark, and 4,345 of women.

A NOVEL THIEF-CATCHER.—A man recently was sent to prison by the Glasgow magistrates for stealing from a collection plate at a Baptist chapel. One of the elders said they had been losing a five-shilling piece for two or three Sundays, and on this occasion they marked one, and put a little sealing-wax to the back of it, and affixed thereto a thread three or four yards long, to the other end of which an envelope was attached. They saw the prisoner's arm pass over the plate, and the envelope followed him.

TWILIGHT SHADOWS.

The daylight fades, and strangely still,
Floats down upon the distant hill,
And on the nearer plain and trees,
The twilight veil of mysteries.

Unseen, the harbinger of night
Creeps stealthily between my sight,
And the faint letters of the book
That fade and darken as I look.

In silence, sitting by the fire,
What wonder if my thoughts aspire
To people with companions bright
This silver border of the night?

What if to me the shadows take
A definite and real shape,
And I behold around me stand
Guests from the unseen spirit-land?

Invisibly, and one by one,
They gather in the gleaming dun;
I cannot touch nor feel them here,
But yet I know that they are near.

Oh, loved ones—kindest, dearest, best,
My spirit clings to you for rest;
Sweet comforters in life's sad pain,
For evermore with me remain.

It may not be. Alas! they go
Fading majestically and slow;
Yet never doubt that they have been
Because their presence is unseen. M. H.

GEMS.

If you have built castles in the air your work need not be lost. That is where they should be. Now put foundations under them.

Nothing makes love sweeter and tenderer than a little previous scolding and freezing, just as the grape clusters acquire by frost before vintage thinner skins and better flavour.

A passionate and revengeful temper renders a man unfit for advice, deprives him of his reason, and robs him of all that is great and noble in his nature.

The man who lives right and is right has more power in his silence than another has by his words. Character is like bells which ring out sweet music, and which, when touched accidentally, even resound with music.

The shortest and surest way to live with honour in the world is to be in reality what you would appear to be; and if we observe we shall find that all human virtues increase and strengthen by the practice and experience of them.

Deal out kindness and favours with an unsparring hand. The cause you understand not search out. If you cannot find happiness by direct search try another plan. Make others happy, and see if that does not make you truly blessed.

It is worthy of note that the men and women who think most highly of themselves and meanly of others are those who render back to society for the good things they enjoy the smallest return of effort.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OATMEAL PORRIDGE.—Porridge, to be easily digestible, should be made rather thin and boiled for at least half an hour; the gelatinous properties of the oatmeal will thus be brought out, as will be seen by the mixture, on being dished up, flowing from the pan in a liquid state, and on cooling acquiring the consistency of jelly. Made thus it is one of the most nutritious and digestible of foods, nourishing, say the savants, not only the body but the brain.

ANILINE DYES.—There are many mordants for fixing these colours on cotton; alumen, tannin, acetate of alumina, chlorate of potash, and acetate of chromium and others are in use. I have found alumen to be the best for cotton, thickened with gum arabic. After printing, the goods are steamed from 30 to 60 minutes, and then washed in cold water. Tannin is a good mordant, but it has a tendency to discolour the white grounds, which necessitates bleaching by passing through a weak solution of chloride of lime and soap lyes.

MEDICINES DESTRUCTIVE TO TEETH.—All acid medicines are injurious to the teeth, and, though they are very valuable in the treatment of dyspepsia and debility, if great care is not exercised they have a ruinous effect on the teeth. Amongst the most injurious are the acid preparations of quinine and iron, but especially hydrochloric and nitro-hydrochloric acids. The best way to avoid their injurious effect is to take them much diluted, and not to drink them from a cup or glass, but to take them through a glass tube, and immediately afterwards to rinse out the mouth with an alkaline solution, such as a solution of bicarbonate of soda.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A FISH STORY.—"By the gourd of Jonah, but it's true!" Thus speaks a chronicler from the "Down East." "The schooner, Henry M. West, fisherman, at Beverley, from Grand Banks, was obliged to come home, as she had nearly lost all her cable in consequence of a large whale becoming entangled in it. The vessel was at anchor, and by some means the whale got the end of the cable nearest the anchor, twisted around his tail, and in his efforts to free himself, became securely entangled. The crew had no intimation of the trouble till the vessel was suddenly towed through the water at the rate of ten or fifteen miles an hour for several miles. The whale lifted himself entirely out of the water several times, and at length broke the cable and freed himself. About one hundred and forty fathoms of cable were lost. Had the monster had the use of his tail he would probably have done serious damage to the vessel." We wonder what the "Ancient Mariners" did when the Plesiosaurus howled and the Pterydactyle swam?

WINDOW PLANTS.—In filling your window box for the winter, don't crowd different species of plants together. Fill a basket entirely with English ivy or similar, and a luxuriant growth can be obtained, particularly if too many shoots be not set in. City florists aim to cram as much as possible into their baskets, and are totally regardless whether the broad leaves of the begonias shade the stems and roots of the more delicate creeping vines. In first setting in the plants, however, place them for a few days in a cold room until new shoots appear. Remember also that plants, and especially ivy, will not grow without light, particularly in the house. Ammonia should be used sparingly to assist weak vegetation. About two drops in a tea cupful of water, given once a week, we have found to be plenty for a good-sized plant, particularly if the earth around the roots be kept loose and not allowed to pack hard.

That blind people possess a delicate ear and a fine touch is a notorious fact. These qualities, however, are often manifested in such a singular way as to be worth mentioning. A few days ago at Douai a blind man was walking in the street under the guidance of his dog, when he suddenly felt himself separated from that faithful friend. A practical joker, or perhaps a regular thief, had cut the string and was taking the dog away with him. The owner, however, was up to the emergency; he pursued the culprit, got hold of him, gave him a sound drubbing and regained possession of his animal. As there can be no question about the man's bona fide blindness, the only way to account for this exploit is to attribute it to his fine hearing, which enabled him to distinguish the thief's steps from those of other people passing at the time.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. M.—We have all the serials we need at present. F. L.—Be guided by your betrothed's wishes, and wait a little while; trust to time to change her parent's decision as regards her marrying you.

D. O.—It would take probably much more than three years' study before you could become a Latin professor. Hard study and perseverance will, however, work wonders.

E. D.—Hesitate no longer to learn your fate. Go to the young lady at once, and make your love known to her.

L. E.—No young gentleman should call upon a lady every evening if he has only a friendly regard for her. Moreover, no lady should allow a gentleman to call so often unless she knows he means matrimony by his attentions.

A. M.—You are not obliged to discuss your business or affairs with every one you may chance to know; but in dealing with a confidential friend be perfectly frank. Disclose the real motives of your conduct, then those who offer from you may still respect you. Nothing is more fatal to a friendship than prevarication and deceit.

HARRY.—You are perfectly correct in refusing to correspond with an engaged young man. His anger at your refusal shows that he is no gentleman.

NELLY.—We doubt whether you have applied the term "gentleman" correctly, for a "gentleman" to whom a lady had been casually introduced would certainly not require any apology should she not think proper to recognise him on a subsequent meeting. A gentleman will wait for a recognition from the lady, and if it is not given he must not take the circumstance in dudgeon, but accept it as an intimation that a further acquaintance is not desired.

U. R.—When a gentleman is first introduced to a lady he should merely bow in acknowledgment of her salute.

W. F.—The proper name of the falls is Niagara, or aghera, two Indian words, signifying, "Hark to the thunder."

Y. Z.—When a lady is not engaged she wears a hoop or diamond ring on her first finger; if engaged, on the second; if married, on the third, and on the fourth if she intends to remain single.

E. S.—Argus was one of the mythological heroes of antiquity, said to have a hundred eyes, of which two only slept in succession.

JON.—The air is not heated by the rays of the sun, because the air is a very bad conductor, but the sun heats the earth, and the earth heats the air resting upon it. The air thus heated rises, and its place is filled by other air, which in turn becomes heated in a similar manner, until the whole volume is warmed by convective currents.

TEP.—The names of the stars that rise and set with the sun, and are consequently called morning and evening stars, are Venus and Jupiter. We will take your request into consideration.

F. P.—If you have anything written with a lead pencil that you wish to preserve from running out, dip the paper into skimmed milk. Then dry it and iron it on the wrong side. In ironing paper, do not let the iron rest a moment (as it will leave a crease or mark) but go over it as rapidly as possible.

CECIL.—The shepherds of Egypt had a singular manner of dressing eggs without the aid of fire. They placed them in a sling, which they turned so rapidly that the friction of the air heated them to the exact point required for use.

MARY.—You must curb your temper, which you confess to be bad. All quarrels ought to be studiously avoided, but especially conjugal ones, as no one can possibly tell where they will end; besides, that lasting dislike often the consequence of occasional disgust, and that the cup of life is bitter enough, without squeezing in the hateful

ring of resentment. Consider the evil example your conjugal quarrels are setting your children.

H. W.—It is impossible to say what will reclaim a husband who has degenerated so sadly as to absent himself from home constantly, to tell his wife to leave him if she is not suited with his conduct, and threatened to leave her and his child in this unfriendly world. It is almost a hopeless case.

WIMMIE, twenty, tall, dark hair and eyes, considered good-looking, would like to correspond with a tall, fair young man.

JANET, eighteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, with a view to matrimony.

ELIZABETH JENNIE, eighteen, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony.

JESAMATTA and CECILIA, two young ladies of the Jewish persuasion, wish to correspond with two good-looking young men of the same persuasion. Both are considered good-looking.

CHILIA and BELLA, two friends, wish to correspond with two young gentlemen. Chil is nineteen, dark hair, and black eyes. Bella is twenty, blue eyes, brown hair. Both are of loving dispositions.

A. K., twenty-five, dark hair, light eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty, and of a loving disposition.

MAT, ANNETTE, and LIZZIE, three friends, would like to receive carte-de-visite of three young men with a view to matrimony. Mat is twenty-two, light hair, grey eyes, and of a loving disposition. Annette is twenty-three, brown hair, brown eyes, good-tempered, thoroughly domesticated. Lizzie is twenty-three, brown hair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, fond of home. All three musical.

DULL PLUMAGE.

Little dull-coloured birds
Sing a gay, thankful song,
For the sombre-hued coat
That has grieved you so long.

For to you, little birds,
It means safety, and rest,
And songs, when you choose,
On mother-warm nest.

New, at Fashion's command,
Every beautiful plume,
Through the bullet or snare,
Comes at last to its doom.

And gay, harmless lives,
That have brightened the bough,
Go out on the shrine
Where her votaries vow.

All the beautiful sheen,
Red and gold in the sun,
Of the humming bird's breast,
From the primal hues spun.

Are but death-warrants all,
With a glittering brand,
That will lie, by-and-by,
In the grim hunter's hand.

Even Juno's proud bird
Bears his plumage so gay
To his death—silly one—
As he struts on his way.

Where the covetous glance
Counts the strange starry eyes,
Sees the gleam of the breast,
As a milliner's prize.

So dress the dull plumes
That grieved you so long,
Small creature, and sing,
A thanksgiving song.

Your nestlings love better
That old rusty coat,
Than the sun-burnished mail
Of a tropical throat.

Sing, then, of the light
Which you once could not see,
The sequel that comes
To a life's mystery.

As mortals sing psalms,
In the ebb of life's tides,
Not for blessings bestowed,
But for blessings denied.

E. L.

ALICE and ELEANOR, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men of loving dispositions, and fond of music. Alice is dark, good-tempered, and good-looking. Eleanore is dark, and good-looking. Tradesmen preferred.

FRONT and BEAR FLAP, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies about twenty-two. Front Flap is twenty-two, tall, and of a loving disposition. Bear Flap is twenty-three, tall, and of a loving disposition.

ANNIE and LIZZIE, two friends, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with two tradesmen in or near Birmingham. Annie is twenty-six, dark hair and eyes, medium height, fond of home, and of a loving disposition. Lizzie is twenty-eight, dark hair and eyes, medium height, fond of home.

HERBERT and ALFRED, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Herbert is twenty-one, curly hair, blue eyes. Alfred is dark, medium height, good-looking.

DAISY S., seventeen, fair, and thoroughly domesticated, wishes to correspond with a dark young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

W. J. G., a landsman in H.M.'s 107th regiment, tall, nineteen, dark, good-looking, would like to receive carte-de-visite of a young lady. Must be eighteen, and fond of home.

HOMER, twenty-one, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about eighteen, who must be fair and fond of home, and of a very loving disposition.

CHARLES, thirty, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-five, with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be domesticated.

CARLOS, forty-five, an educated gentleman, fair, dark brown hair, good-tempered, and domesticated, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with a dark, good-looking young lady, with a view to matrimony.

POOP AWNINE and SHARK'S MOUTH, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies between nineteen and twenty. Poop Awnine is nineteen, black curly hair, blue eyes, and tall. Shark's Mouth is twenty-one, brown hair, hazel eyes, tall, and dark.

ABELINE C., twenty, medium height, considered good-looking, of a loving disposition, domesticated, fond of home and children, would like to exchange carte-de-visite with a young gentleman of a loving disposition, with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be twenty-four, tall, and in a good position.

MAGGIE, FOLLIE, and JENNIE would like to correspond with three young men between twenty and thirty. Maggie is twenty-two, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes. Follie is eighteen, tall, light brown hair, hazel eyes. Jennie has dark brown hair, hazel eyes, medium height, and of a loving disposition. Respondents must be fond of home.

HATTY D., twenty-five, tall, and fair, would like to correspond with a gentleman about her own age.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

EMILY is responded to by—Rachel, seventeen, medium height.

ANNIE by—Rufus, twenty, dark, tall, considered good-looking.

LIZZIE by—D. M., auburn hair, blue eyes, and fond of home.

SAM M. by—Carrie, twenty-six, medium height, blue eyes.

JACK by—May, twenty-one, medium height, considered good-looking, black hair and eyes, thinks she is all he requires.

MAY by—Ted, twenty-six, handsome, and very fond of home.

MAUDE by—Arthur, nineteen, dark complexion, in a good position.

NELLIE by—G. T., twenty-nine, good-looking, medium height.

NED L. by—Topsy, nineteen, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

MILLY by—N. B., twenty-eight, medium height, good-looking.

NELLY B. by—Alfred W., nineteen, short, considered good-looking.

JOAN by—Maud, eighteen, medium height, and brown hair.

LOTTIE by—M. B., eighteen, medium height, fond of society.

L. L. by—Sophy, sixteen, fair complexion, good-looking.

JENNIE by—Tom, thirty, a widower, medium height, fair.

JIM by—Ethel, seventeen, brown hair, brown eyes, and in a good position.

B. R. by—Bella, tall, dark complexion, fond of home and children.

MARIE by—Frank, twenty-four, medium height, good-looking.

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